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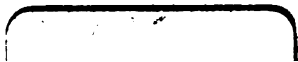
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The Case of John Smith

His Heaven and His Hell

1

By

Elizabeth Bisland *Wedmore*

Author of "The Life and Letters of Lafcadio Hearn," "At
the Sign of the Hobby Horse," etc.

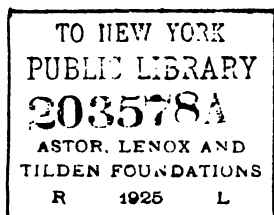


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The Knickerbocker Press, New York

"THE King of Northumberland feasted with his Court. Without was winter and a night of snow, but the Hall was right merry with wine and laughter, and warm with great fires and many torches.

"Of a sudden a small bird flew in from the darkness, fluttering above the wassail about the tables and fleeing again in a moment into the black wildness of the storm.

"The knights laughed a little, watching its frightened flight, but the King smiled not and fell to silence and deep musing. So at last the feasters too fell mute and went away quietly one by one, leaving the old Chieftain with his head sunk upon his breast.

"'What ails my Lord?' asked the Seneschal who stood by the King's chair.

"'Marked you yon bird?' said the King. 'He came from darkness and vanished into darkness. Even so is man's life. We come, and the wise men cannot tell us whence. We go, and they cannot tell us whither. If any there be can read us this riddle aright, in God's name let him speak!'"



CONTENTS

	PAGE
I.—THE VOICE OF THE GOD . . .	I
II.—THE CASE OF JOHN SMITH . . .	10
III.—THE SPIRIT OF UNDERSTANDING . . .	25
IV.—THE GREAT STRANGE HOUSE . . .	35
V.—THE IRON BOXES	45
VI.—A JAPANESE GARDEN	62
VII.—THE OPPORTUNITY OF EXILE . . .	75
VIII.—THE ORIGIN OF EVIL	83
IX.—THE HOUSE APPOINTED FOR ALL LIVING	97
X.—THE DAWN-BEARERS	117
XI.—THE LIVING DREAM	148
XII.—THE LONG WAY HOME	164
XIII.—HIS HOUSE IN ORDER	185
XIV.—WISDOM'S GATE	227

The Case of John Smith

“One who brings
A mind not to be changed by place or time.
The mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven.”
Paradise Lost.

I

“**H**E is his own worst enemy.” . . .
So we describe in a phrase the
unhappy creature who in wild wilful- **The Voice**
ness of soul tatters and defaces the **of the God**
lovely gift of life.

We look on in distressed amazement as the mis-
creant dissipates his fortune, wrecks his health,
alienates friends, repels love, wears out patience.
It is as if some madness were upon him, blinding
him to the value of what he annihilated; as if some
dreadful delirium to his diseased perceptions trans-
formed all his real treasures into hateful burdens
which he yearned to destroy and cast from him.

When at last—bare of honour, wealth, love, and reverence—we lay the stark wretch in his last bed and over him draw the decent concealing coverlid of earth, his strange delusion draws from us the sorrowfulest, most pitying sigh ever breathed above the dead.

The stony-hearted older faiths consigned this madman to unending punishment, as the logical penalty due his wicked short-sightedness. Only the unquenchable fires of hell, it was thought, might reveal a vision of the truth to so dark a soul.

Because of some curious moral astigmatism—some odd inequality of seeing between the right and left eyes of the mind—those who cast away all the benefits of life here in the hope of securing greater benefits in a life hereafter have, on the other hand, been esteemed as saints, deserving of an immortal reward. Judgment was bemused, perhaps, by the saint's fixed emotional purpose as contrasted with the unreasoning destructiveness of the sinner. To sacrifice present indulgence to the hope of a future good was so often a wise decision in the experience of the normal man it inclined him to respect the ascetic and the anchorite fleeing to the desert, abandoning every element of life save mere existence in order to earn a fuller, wider life after death. Such a course seemed to the temperate nature only a raising of temperance to its extremest conclusion, and he did not doubt the unusual continence would earn unusual recompense. . . .

The whereabouts of these places of rewards and punishments was however a matter for much difference of opinion.

The stars, the moon, the sun, the overarching ether, the interior of the earth itself, were alternately guessed at as possible locations for the eternal bliss or bale. Depictions of the horrors and joys of these vaguely oriented regions were equally questions of individual taste and imagination. Wherever hell or heaven might be they strangely resembled the best and worst we knew of life in its more material forms. Extreme heat, extreme cold, "the horror of thick darkness," unrelenting toil, continuous mental and physical pain, were the worst of earthly inflictions, and all hells were simply exaggerations of our most excessive mortal sufferings. Leisure, sunshine, music, perfume, unstinted and delicious food and drink, beautiful and tender companions, the joyous sense of deserved approbation and responsive love were the most obvious pleasures of this life, and every heaven became a harmony created upon these seven strings. According to the fineness or grossness of the imagination the grosser or the more spiritual of these griefs and delights were especially stressed, and to attain these joys, or escape these pains, mankind almost from its infancy unduly ignored and neglected the immediate conditions by which it was environed.

Toward such an end how many in all lands, in all the ages, have renounced the love of human

beings, fasted from all but such food as mere life demanded, closed their ears to earthly melodies, immured themselves from sunshine and beauty, maimed and tortured their own bodies—in short assumed the pains of hell here in order to attain to the pleasures of heaven elsewhere.

Of all the strange and sorrowful illusions of our strange race this one surely has been the most fantastic. It is as if, bidden to a splendid feast, we should peevishly push from us the offered viands in the hope of being invited to a still more splendid banquet tomorrow. As if, welcomed to a radiant palace, we should shut ourselves into the cellar expecting thereby to earn the proffer of a still more magnificent dwelling elsewhere—and be asked to stay longer! Certainly such frowardness would not be likely to please a human host. Ungrateful, unappreciative guests could not hope for further civilities after such insanely rude behaviour. In the name of reason, why should the gods have been expected to have greater patience with discourtesy?—they who were notoriously exacting and sensitive.

What, indeed, must be the opinion of us entertained by the gods whom we have worshipped? We whom they have summoned to this princely habitation roofed by a stupendous arch of blue across which march the endless pageants of the clouds:—clouds heaped one moment into monstrous splendours, toppling the next into incandescent ruins, or unrolling the waving curtains of

the mist to be lit by rainbows, or be slashed across by the lightning's blade. . . .

"Clouds"—(we may imagine one of the gods saying reproachfully)—"whose flying circuit of your sphere damascenes the floor of earth with ceaseless bewitching patterns of light and shade, and which again and again at dawn and eve glow into unutterable glories, never twice the same.

"To you"—(we will conceive him continuing his bitter indictment)—"I have given as companions the sun and moon to work a never-ending glamour, and have added to them the silver spangle of the stars.

"The walls of your dwelling are wrought of mighty mountains, of suave hills; are hung with the white drapery of falling waters, and a tapestry of verdure whose tints are changed with every season. Beneath your feet are spread carpets fit for the feet of kings. Look down for a moment and consider the ever-altering miracle of pattern and colour upon which you tread. . . .

"Oh, base ungrateful guests!—Had I given you only my one magical gift of the flowers should not that alone have contented a pious mind?—even if to their infinite variety of tint and grace I had not added the super-gift of perfume. . . .

"Consider the cunning artifice of the feast I have spread upon your tables—The meats, the grains, the milk and honey, the wine and water, the thousand savours of the herbs and nuts and roots, and—last and best of all—my fruits with

6 The Case of John Smith

their jewel colours for the eye, sweet odours for the nostrils, bland flavours for the palate; three pleasures subtly balanced and interwoven.

"Would you have music at your feast?—Listen to the organ roll of the thunder; to the voice of many waters, from the mighty diapason of the oceans to the sweet pipe of dancing brooks. Listen to the breath of the winds, to the singing of the multitudinous leaves, the trilling of the myriad birds, frogs, insects. In the metal of your mines, the wood of your trees, in the reeds of your pools, in the skins and viscera of animals, even in the chords of your own throats I have hidden exquisite vibrations which are yours at will to develop into divine melodies.

"Around you have been set endless friends, companions, servants, who labour at your command, feed you, guard you, yield their bodies for your amusements and your appetites, their skins and plumage, their wools and furs, even their little silken winding sheets, to gratify your vanities and keep you from the cold.

"Do you ask for love?—Behold how desirable I have made you, man and woman, in one another's eyes. How beautiful as flowers, as soft and dimpled as fruit your children seem to you. How I have given you all the dear and glorious illusions of youth and passion; some little space of ecstasy and—should you so choose—long years of tenderness and truth."

"But beyond and above all material things,

all the delights reaching you through the five gates of the senses, I have given you the impalpable joys of dreams, memories, and emotions, hopes and fears, aspirations and desires."

"And, lest in even this beautiful palace you should weary, for the amusement of your restless minds I have secreted on every hand a thousand million of fascinating secrets, mysteries, puzzles. In the earth, the air, the sea, in your own bodies and minds you shall for ever and for ever make new discoveries of wonders and beauties and strange forces, so that you may never experience ennui. That sameness irk you not the pageant of the seasons shall pass and repass. Dramas shall be played in your sight, from the huge tragedies of geologic and meteorologic readjustments to the tiny comedies of the hive and the anthill."

"Oh, Ingrate!"—(we may imagine the resentful god to exclaim)—"to all these gifts of beauty you close your eyes. Instead of walking reverently in my fair house you tatter and deface its treasures. Like obscene beasts you smear its glories with an ordure of crime and violence and squalid sins. You push from you all my amazing feast and dream of something better, something different."

'But nothing lasts,' you cry. 'Give us all this immortalized?'

"Fool!—The waxen rose loses its beauty in your eyes just because it cannot fade. The painted image wearies you for the very reason that its youth is fixed and can know no change nor decay.

Life and the food of life dulls your relish at last because of its iteration and reiteration."

"Oh, Peevish and Perverse! *How know you that you have not died elsewhere and that this is not the heaven of which there you dreamed? HOW KNOW YOU THAT YOUR HELL MAY NOT LIE ONLY IN NOT RECOGNIZING THIS AS HEAVEN? . . .*"

After which tremendous question one may picture the offended Benefactor vanishing darkling into the unknowable. . . . Leaving, one may hope, the recipient of this so astounding suggestion suddenly shaken out of his blindness and madness.

We can imagine the surprised and still half-doubtful human crawling slowly up from his cellar and looking about him with new attention. We can see him suddenly, with a deep drawn breath, beginning to appraise the value of his great inheritance. He, himself, for as long as he lives *owns* the sun, moon, and stars, the heavens above, the earth beneath and all that in them is. All the morning and evening and day-long glories of the skies are actually his own. For him the winds blow, the waters clap their hands, the rains and snows fall, the flowers bloom, the fruits ripen, the birds sing. The everlasting hills, the multitudinous seas are his personal property of which he cannot be deprived even by due process of law. Of course no one can use all his belongings at once, can study his treasures every hour, but great pro-

prietors derive satisfaction and dignity from their sense of possession even when busiest about small matters.

From him to whom has come this new knowledge the iron band of cramping jealousies, envies, bitter-nesses falls away. He who has heard the message at last becomes aware that he too has attained great glories; is one of the mighty. No one owns these vast properties to the exclusion of himself, yet he need fear no envy, for all his companions have an equal wealth. He is not the unbidden guest at the feast of existence—is not the disinherited child. Though mayhap not one of those called to the best seat at the table, yet his kindly host has heaped his dish with dainties. Not able to roam it may be through all the palace, yet his own chambers also are hung with lavish splendours.

The magnificent rhetoric of the reproachful deity may have put the case in large generalizations, but the listener realizes that the truth has not been overstated.

II

LET us now imagine this revelation vouchsafed to, let us say, a certain John Smith as he laboured at his typewriter during a busy day. He had hardly had time to grasp it fully, for the afternoon waned and his employer was impatient for uncompleted documents, yet Smith's subconscious self turned over the idea busily while his fingers played upon the lettered keys. By the time he delivered the neatly folded and labelled papers, and prepared to catch the 5.37 train to Lonelyville, he had begun to be a little familiar with these so new intimations.

Watching the scowling face of his employer as he jammed himself into his overcoat and hat, thrust the papers into his pocket, and slammed himself out of the office without thanks or farewell, John Smith muttered amusedly, as he in turn prepared to depart from the scene of his labours: "Gee!—I guess the Boss don't suspect this is heaven. He's got a good business, a nice wife, and a new motor car, yet I bet he thinks things in general are a good deal more like hell. Sort of funny when you come to consider it."

Smith's habit had been to read the evening

paper during the journey homeward, and, incidentally, to anathematize the railway company for the poor light, the shabby cars, and the unevenness of the track. It had seemed one of the worst hardships of his lot, that dull suburban journey twice a day, but this evening the paper failed to hold his attention. His new idea looked fresher and more important than the contents of the latest extra, even though its flaring headlines reiterated the horrors of a general European war.

He pushed up the dusty window and leaned out to look at the September moon rising rosily-gold through the misty amethyst of the dusk that brooded across the marshes. It had always seemed a vapid, ugly outlook heretofore, but the new sense of ownership opened his eyes to the magic of those dim purples and pansy-browns.

"*Minel*"—he smiled, and found it as pleasant a stretch of landscape as a man might wish to see.

Here and there a glint of silver was lighting the soft expanse of tawny sea-grass where the rising tide had filled a brackish pool. He breathed his lungs full of the mild salt air that moved languidly through the growing night, the weariness of the day's work falling from him like the dropping of an actual burden.

"My!—don't the moon look pretty tonight," exclaimed a woman to her companion in the seat behind him.

Smith flushed a little at her comment and

grinned half deprecatingly. It was pleasant to hear his belongings so frankly admired. . . .

Lonelyville was a new "building scheme" pushing out into the fields beyond the little town where he left the train. Its magnificently wide avenues, with unfinished sidewalks and trees still in the clothes-pole stage, were but sparsely inhabited as yet by excessively detached dwellings. He had always resented the ten minutes' walk between the alighting and his own door, but tonight it seemed less burdensome than usual. It would give him time, he felt, to digest this astonishing new thought.

The electric lights sputtered a little and glowed a silvery purple, being newly turned on, and then the current steadying, flared into pink radiance, casting upon the pavement beneath clear sepia shadows of the fast thinning boughs. He paused a moment to watch the fine lines at his feet flitting and mingling as the wind breathed through the branches.

"That's about as charming a thing as you'd ever find," he reflected admiringly. "Guess I never noticed it before, though I've certainly seen it a thousand times. It must look fine when there is snow on the ground—I'll remember to watch out for it this winter. Anyhow it's a regular picture, and it's mine," he smiled to himself, moving on.

The chimes rang from a neighbouring steeple; clashes of melodious vibration, tangling the new-

smitten bell notes with the still quivering tones of their forerunners into a woven braid of sound. They proclaimed with sweet sonority that

“He who watches over Israel
Neither slumbers nor sleeps.”

“Lord! that’s nice too,” John Smith told himself appreciatively as he hurried on.

“I thought the minister was a blithering old idiot asking for money to stick a lot of bells in the steeple. I said to Nelly when she was trying to tease a dollar out of me—‘What’s the use of ‘em,’ I said. ‘Just wasting money to make an infernal lot of noise.’—But I guess the parson knew what he was about. It’s real pleasant walking home to big music like that. . . . And all that’s mine too.”

The houses began to space farther apart. He neared the end of the little town. A mound of moist leaves, brushed from the streets since last night’s storm, slowly burned in a vacant lot. The breeze carried to him from the smouldering heap thin wisps of pungent smoke, sweet as incense.

“Well, if that smell don’t take me right back to the farm,” he mentally exclaimed. “Makes me think how Ma used to put us to raking and burning the leaves evenings in the fall when the chores were done.”

The necromancy of an odour woke a quick vision of his hardy Spartan childhood; the stern

14 The Case of John Smith

discipline of study and labour, the meagre fare and few indulgences, because of which he had been so restive, from which at last he had fled resentfully to the city.

He had remembered his early years always with a certain bitterness, but the perfume of the smoking leaves seemed suddenly to readjust and sweeten those recollections.

How clean, and wholesome, and God-fearing that life had been. What delicious sleep he had known after toil; what fine vigour and sanity of body followed upon the sweat in the sun; how good the plain food had tasted when one never had a crumb too much. No meals had ever seemed quite the same since. . . .

And the yearly circus, his one pleasure, for which he had had to earn his entrance money—why, if someone were to give him a box at the opera for the whole season he couldn't quiver with ecstasy for weeks before and after as he did in those days over his single luxury. . . .

His one luxury? By George!—now he came to think of it he'd had a thousand. He'd not realized it at the time. . . .

His nostrils were reminiscent of all the good country smells—the mild milky odour of the cows as he drove them home in the evenings; of the hot spiciness of the pine needles when he snatched ten minutes, sleep after the noon dinner; of the warm nourishing perfume of the hay as he pitched it; of the clean bread-like fragrance of the corn he

husked; of the aromatic sap bubbling and singing from the green logs on winter nights. . . .

Memory brought back the savour of his boyhood's food—the flowery sweetness of fresh honey on the hot biscuits for supper, the winey tartness of the first-ripe apples, the crisp deliciousness of the new nuts, the warm juiciness of the blackberries, the bland richness of the fresh buttermilk.

Then that splendid tingling shock of the cold creek water when one dived; the big pulse of the boyish games, the laughter, the thrilling mischief. . . .

“That was a sort of heaven, too—if I'd only known it,” he told himself amazedly. “And me cursing the farm all these years! Guess I've been pretty considerable of a fool in my time. . . .”

A last whiff of the smoke as he passed on brought a later memory.

Little Nelly had been buried in September, and he recalled passing just such a scented leaf-fire that first night as he came home after the funeral. That desperate evening when he knew he should find Nelly, the mother, waiting for him in new black and unquenchable tears in the house lonely for ever of the gay presence of the child.

He stopped, with a pang, to consider this from his new point of view. How could one call any place a heaven where a man could suffer as he had done that night, and many nights? It didn't seem reconcilable.

Little Nelly! . . .

A sob rose in his throat, and his eyes stung. Of course he loved his two boys—but his girl! . . . She was different. He could see her curls now; could feel her small soft arms about his neck when she ran “to give Daddy a big hug” every night when he came home from work. And now she was only a name. Just a small grassed-over mound in the cemetery behind the hill. After a while, when he and Nelly were gone, no one would remember she’d ever lived. That was the hardest part—that she should be forgotten as if she’d never been at all, his little Dear. . . . All her pretty tricks came back to his memory as if it were only yesterday she had died.

She was like a rose . . . like a bird. . . .

A deep elemental tenderness flooded his heart.

He’d never paid much attention to roses till Nelly died, but now they always made him think of her. It was why he and her mother had such pleasure in their garden, particularly when the roses came in June—her birthday month. The best of them they always saved for the little mound and most of the others went to the Children’s Hospital. How pleased the sick kids always were with the bouquets of roses and honeysuckle and the card tied on that said “With Little Nelly’s love.”

Why, heavens! That was just what his girl had taught him, pity and love. . . .

Like a rose . . . like a bird. . . . Like a bird she had come and had flown, but she’d left

something behind her. He'd been stupid before—just hadn't thought—but Nelly had shown him the meaning of the suffering of other folk's children. Her sufferings had made him feel he'd like to help and comfort all the little young helpless creatures in the world. And suddenly the old hidden hurt melted into unutterable sweetness.

Nelly forgotten?—She'd live always in the kindness he'd carry on to others, and that they would give in turn down the generations. When you came to think of it the world couldn't get on without the pain that taught you to feel for other folk's pain.

Perhaps that was just the way the very first kindness began! . . .

His Baby!—He'd never ask again why she'd been taken away. She'd gone so that she might teach him pity and a wider love. Perhaps if she'd stayed he never would have learned. She'd be like a hidden treasure in his breast always now, to be shared with all who needed. You couldn't call a child dead who went on helping other people to live. . . .

The moon was well up. The flooding creek turned to a river of light. He glanced, hurrying past, at the young beech tree which grew at the entrance of his street of sparse, scattered houses. Already nearly all its leaves had gone. It stood up bare and silvery, lifting its slender branches as if dancing lightly in the soft winds of the darkness. He'd hardly noticed it before, but he lingered

a moment to look, and thought the tree as pretty as a slim nude girl. Then, his gaze turned back lingeringly, he passed on with quick steps to the light shining from his own windows.

"You're awful late this evening," said his wife fretfully as he hung his overcoat on the hook in the passage. "I do wish we could live somewhere you didn't have such a tiresome long way to come from the station."

"Oh, I don't mind," he answered cheerfully, putting his arm about her shoulders and giving her a kiss. "It's a real pretty walk a night like this; sort of blows the office out of your lungs."

He noted her flush of pleasure at his tenderness and reminded himself never again to forget the little caress when he came home. He supposed women cared more than you'd think about small things like that.

"The grate in the range burnt out this morning," she announced as they sat down to supper, "and the plumber came to see about it. He had to draw the fire, and it looked like he wouldn't get it done in time to cook anything tonight."

"Seems you managed, though," he smiled. "Bully good meal, I call it, but it's safe to bet on you getting there, every time."

His wife's brow smoothed.

"Well, it took hustling to do it. The worst thing was Liphook always wants cash right down, so I had to give him what we'd put aside for taking the young ones to the White City tomorrow.

Jim and Rob are feeling awfully downhearted about it."

The two sleek-headed boys looked their disgust—mouths and hearts both too full to do spoken justice to the subject.

"That's a pity; but look here now, how about doing up a cold lunch tomorrow and taking a trolley into the country somewheres. Think I'd like that better anyhow. Say, boys, let's go out and take a look at our country estate."

"Country estate! It's a grand estate we've got. It's as much as we can do to keep up the payments on this house—though it's country enough, goodness knows," Mrs. Smith commented tartly.

"Well, there's Crawford's Beach out at the end of the line. We can go there, and I guess all out-of-doors is as much ours as anybody's. Pretty big estate when you come to think of it."

"Oh, if you choose to call it yours, I suppose it is *big* enough."

"Well, whose is it if it isn't ours? We'll give it to the boys when we're done with it, Nelly. Hey, fellows! you'll be rich young bloods when I leave you all out-of-doors in my will. Guess the Vanderbilt and the Astor children won't get anything bigger than that."

The boys kicked the rungs of their chairs and snickered. Dad was in an awful good humour, they thought.

"Anything special happen at the office today?"

his wife enquired. John was usually rather weary and cross Saturday nights. These high spirits must have a cause.

"Well, the Boss was in a pickle of a temper because some business came in late and prevented his getting off till after five. He was meaning to motor up the State a ways to his Country Club, but it's easy enough to make it after dinner with this moon."

"Some folks are never satisfied," commented his wife scornfully. "Of course he didn't think about your being kept late too, and no motor car to come home in, either."

"Oh, well, I'd a nice walk, and that was more than he did," laughed her husband contentedly as he rose to look for his pipe. "Here, you boys—you'd better get off to bed; we've got to make a long day of it tomorrow."

They had made a long day of it. A yellow trolley car, with its "witch's broom" touching the magic strand of wire threaded through the land had whirled them past pale blonde autumn fields, and rocked them through gold and scarlet woods to the sleeping indigo sea that frilled a languid foam upon the long stretch of sallow sands.

The boys had wiled their father into an elaborate game of fort and castle building by the water's edge—a game occupying all the morning with salt and gritty but inspiring labour, and they

reluctantly abandoned their heaped walls and curving demilunes only at their mother's midday call to food.

She had chosen as a dining-room the angle of an old fragment of crumbling worm-fence, once closing in the pasture from the beach. Over the grey rails, furred and hoary with lichens, hung a tattered crimson drapery of Virginia creeper. Above slanted an ancient cedar, worn and bent by the winds but still sucking sturdiness from the salt moisture beloved of its roots—a little wild sea bower where she had spread her meal beside a posy gathered in the meadow and set upright between two stones; a posy of purple ironweed, mauve asters, and late goldenrod half fluffed into a tawny fur of seeds.

"Well, you're the great one!" her husband cried admiringly as he dropped beside the cloth. "You'd make a sort of home wherever they set you down. Deserts or desert islands wouldn't phase the old lady."

The boys grinned appreciatively as she blushed and dimpled.

How good the food tasted;—how good was the pipe after it!

"No, you villains," their father protested as he stretched himself in the warm sand and propped his shoulders against the tree, lazily watching his wife pack the basket. "You build your own forts. I'm helping your Mommer."

"Humph!—*helping*—" his wife scoffed cheer-

fully, and the boys wandered back to the irresistible treasures of weeds and shells.

"Oh, John!" she yearned, finishing her task and settling herself beside him. "Don't you wish we were rich and could do things like this every day?"

"I don't know. Guess we wouldn't care about it if we were. You never see rich people doing pleasant things that don't cost money, do you now? Can you imagine my Boss and Mrs. Boss liking this?"

They exchanged amused smiles at the idea, and he went on:

"As for being rich, seems to me we've got an awful lot already." He waved his hand comprehensively. "And wait a minute!—here's something handsome for you—look at that!"

A late dragonfly lingering, by some quaint tenderness of the season's oversight, alone of all his race, drifted down the breeze and hung hovering over her posy.

"Ain't that wonderful? He's like a piece of jewellery flying about. I'll make you a present of him, Nelly, and I bet the Boss never gave his wife anything finer than that."

She studied the silent flickering of the winged gem circling her flowers, and as it vanished, turned a brooding eye upon her husband.

"You might just as well tell me, John Smith," she said severely. "You've been talking awfully queer, and I am going to know what it means."

And then he did try to tell her—stumblingly; in broken ejaculation, with inadequate phrases.

"It sort of came to me," he concluded, putting away his pipe and clasping his knees. "I don't know just how—as if somebody was talking—kind of wirelesslying it into my head." . . . He looked gravely into her wide, startled eyes. "Just think what it means, Nelly, if it's true—and by George! I believe it is. . . . *This* heaven, right here and now, if we could only see it was. All these splendid big things our own property. And did you ever feel before how fine they are? I never did. It sort of makes your heart swell up inside of you to see them so beautiful, and know they're all our own—things that looked only just common and natural before. After you think of them this new way it seems enough just to see, and hear, and breathe, and sleep and eat. . . ."

She made no answer. She let her wondering glance pass up to the benignant paleness of the blue above; out to the deep-toned autumn sea that sighed slumberously against the grey-gold sand. She brooded a moment upon the dull rose and jade of the lichens clothing the rails of the sagging fence; upon her nosegay propped between the two veined stones; on the fluttering bright leaves of the creeper. The shouting play of her two sturdy lads held her attention for a while. Then the gaze came back to the man stretched beside her along the thin fading grass.

"Oh—but John!" she began, and caught a long

breath. "Don't you see? It's sort of terrible——"

"Terrible?"

"Yes. . . . If it *is*—well, then we've got to be so awfully careful not to spoil it. You couldn't do anything mean, or bad, or cruel in heaven you know——"

He considered a moment, in the light of this idea, and reaching out gathered the hand nearest him into a close grasp.

"That's a new one to me—but yes, Nell, I guess you're right. It comes to just about that."

"And to think," she went on, with another deep breath, "of the way they are acting over in Europe now!—blowing each other in pieces and spoiling all the houses and towns and everything. Why, of course, if folks act so foolish how's any place going to be like heaven? Seems to me if they only knew what place they're in they'd behave different. It's a pity somebody doesn't tell them."

John Smith lifted himself to his feet and began to brush the sand from his trousers.

"Perhaps nobody ever has told them," he said regretfully. "I wish somebody'd try to make them understand: but of course they wouldn't listen to you or me. They'd just sniff and call us crazy cranks. Well, let's call the boys. It's about time we were getting home, Mommer."

III

A VAGUE sense of a radiance close at hand, causing him to glance frequently over his shoulder, came to John Smith as time passed. There was nothing definite to be seen. His first thought was that he had forgotten to draw down the office blind, but the sensation was quite as clear after the day was done and he was carrying his new idea home with him in the dusk, turning it over, trying to grasp some of its infinite implications.

**The Spirit
of Under-
standing**

This impression of light grew stronger as the weeks elapsed, as did his habit of turning suddenly to catch a glimpse of something or someone near. Once he fancied he had a fleeting vision of lucent outlines, but he told himself this must have been but a fancy, and for long the thing tantalized him with a sense of an elusive following presence. Yet the light always grew and deepened, and the consciousness of a personality, a being, near at hand became a conviction.

He was at times sure he saw it, and then was less sure, and he could hardly have told—so gradual was the realization—when he became wholly aware of the exquisite thing that was his

companion on those shadowy tramps every evening from the station to his home in Roosevelt Terrace, Lonelyville. It was much later yet when he found courage to speak to this glimmering comrade.

"I'd like to know just who you are," he said at last, with shy abruptness.

"Have you no idea?" she demanded smilingly, turning her deep shining eyes upon him.

"No, I haven't," he admitted reluctantly, and then in a burst of irrepressible frankness: "But whoever you are you're a 'looker.'"

"Yes," she replied amiably, "I have always been thought beautiful by those who have known me."

"But what's your name?" he persisted.

"I've been known by so many names!—Men have called me Religion, and Philosophy, and Art, and Truth, and Poetry, and Wisdom. You see I have so many forms, and am seen so differently by different eyes. What I call myself is the Spirit of Understanding."

"It's very kind of you to walk home with me," John Smith said humbly. Her manner, gentle as it was, gave him the impression that she was a very great lady.

"Oh, I don't bestow my society exclusively on the people who are considered important. 'Babes and sucklings'—you know," she laughed.

He smiled with polite vagueness in answer, not being quite sure of her meaning.

"To those who confide themselves to my lead-

The Spirit of Understanding 27

ing," she continued, "I show the most surprising things."

"Will you show them to me?" he enquired hopefully.

"Why not? You are one of those who have eyes to see, and they are rare folk," she said indulgently. "I gave you a message not a great while since and you understood it."

"It was you, then," he cried, and as she nodded kindly: "Why, I told Nelly it was just like someone speaking. . . ."

"You shall see as well as hear," the Shining Lady murmured, laying her hand on his, and very suddenly and surprisingly John Smith was aware that instead of making the third turning to the left he was walking with his Shimmering Lady in a vast country where there were mountains and plains, forests, rivers, brooks, and shining seas. He saw around him flowers, and fields of grass, and sandy wastes, and many great cities, smaller towns, and little villages.

Everywhere throughout this prodigious landscape there were men and women and children. Most of the children ran about freely enjoying the big things and the little ones, but to John Smith's amazement those who were passing into adolescence, and all the elders without exception, went with their limbs fettered. At first he supposed that these unfortunate persons were the victims of an alien oppression, the slaves of some cruel tyranny, but as they passed on their way—

he and his companion—he noticed many in the act of tying complicated bands about themselves with an air of virtuous complacency. One tied a bandage over his eyes, another was pouring wax into his ears and nostrils, another knotting ropes about his ankles so that he could walk only by shambling hops. Still others tied up one arm or both, forced their necks through heavy yokes, sought out stones and bound them on their backs, drew up and buckled straps about their chests till their labouring lungs whistled for breath. A few, in what seemed to John Smith a sort of desperate insanity, maimed themselves horribly, cut their own tendons, disfigured their faces, gashed their bodies, dug out their own eyes, cut out their tongues.

“But why do they do such things?” he cried in horror. “Is this a land of madmen?”

“One would think so to look at them, would one not?” said his Lady sadly. “They do not realize it, though. They call themselves practical people who know the world, and yet always they have made for themselves these fetters, have blinded and tortured themselves for many strange reasons. Some of these chains they call habit and custom, or common sense, or worldly wisdom, and some fashion, or propriety. Many of their self maimings and disfigurements go by the name of religion or patriotism or philosophy.”

“Gee!” murmured John Smith.

“Now look over there to the east,” suggested

The Spirit of Understanding 29

the Spirit. "See the millions of women who bind their feet into hooves, and totter about painfully all their lives. They begin this with the babies, and the little things wail and fret all through their first years under the unceasing torture inflicted by their mothers, who really love them. The weaker children are never free from fever during their childhood, a fever brought about by physical misery, and hundreds of thousands of them die of it."

"Well, they certainly *are* looneys" commented her hearer indignantly.

"So the people over there in the west say, and yet among themselves hardly one has a natural, undeformed foot. Many of their women too totter through life in clothing for their feet fantastically unfitted to the human members, and aggravate it by putting a prop under the rear end of their shoes. They have been told again and again, and they know it quite well to be true, that such things produce in thousands of cases all manner of painful, even hideous diseases in other parts of their bodies, but they cling to this chain which blights their freedom and energies and causes them constant sufferings."

John Smith thought of the shape of his own foot and maintained an uncomfortable silence.

"Here you will notice," continued his guide, "are many binding their bodies in an overtight bandage, crushing together all their organs, weighting the action of their hearts, cramping

their lungs, impeding the circulation of their blood: some of them never know a moment of physical comfort for the greater part of their lives because of this bandage. See in that direction—people tearing holes in their flesh to hang jewels in them, jewels so heavy that the lobes of their ears nearly touch their shoulders. There they tear holes in their noses. Yonder men prick their whole bodies from head to heel to make ornamental patterns of various colours, and fester and fever in the doing of it.”

“I notice it’s mostly the women that are the worst,” the man commented a little self-righteously.

“Oh,” answered his guide lightly, “femininity has its favourite chains, but you will see the men in this place do some queer things too. Their favourite chain is the use of poisons. The men in the east, where the women maim their own feet, grow a deadly drug which they inhale through pipes. A drug that rots them body and soul; one of the cruelest fetters ever yet discovered. And turn now to the west. See that huge flood of poison like a vast rushing river . . . watch how the men fling into it youth and health, honour, hope, wealth, virtue, intellect—everything they possess. They bathe in that hideous flood of fiery fluid: saturate themselves in its bitter waters, and some of them, maddened by it, kill their friends, their wives, their children, themselves. You will admit, my friend, that when men clasp such

a gyve as this upon their limbs even the tortured foot seems but a light bond by contrast."

John Smith sighed and shook his head.

"It looks a kind of foolish thing when you see them doing it," he owned.

"There are many other bands. Gluttony is one of them, and even a greater favourite than drink. These people have been shown a thousand times that an extremely small amount of the very simplest food is all they need for health, and strength, and comfort, yet almost without exception they eat twice as much as they require and fill the world with misery because of it. Look at the blind eyes, deaf ears, twisted limbs, swollen joints, bald heads, blotched faces, distended bodies. See the gout, rheumatism, cancer, asthma, catarrh—diseases filthy and indescribably disgusting which this chain of gluttony imposes upon them, yet of all the chains this is the one most universally worn. Hardly one in a thousand walks without it."

"Humph-h," said John Smith a little reluctantly.

"But the worst of all these fettering sins is the one that turns the highest ecstasy man knows—the poignant joy which creates new life—into grossness and mere debauch. The golden chain of love is transformed to burning poisoned manacles which eat into flesh and nerves and soul. A poison which rots the innocent, and befouls and distorts the bodies and minds of the sinner's yet unborn children. This is indeed the major infamy—to use the sacramental wine for vulgar intoxication—

to transmute life's crown into a garland of serpents whose fangs infect the wearer's helpless mate and offspring. . . ."

John Smith flushed darkly red, and looked down in silence.

"These," his guide continued, "are some of the physical bonds. There are many others, but even they do not bind and weigh as do the spiritual fetters. See those who go chained by fear; handcuffed by envy, lust of power, by jealousy, greed, malice, suspicion, ignorance, hate, and scorn. Their faces are so sad, so writhen by bitterness of heart. This beautiful heaven in which they live seems to their cramped and weighted souls a mere murky hell lit by lurid flames that burn their spirits, choke their lungs. Every motion made by their fellows seems to them a menace of evil; the hands of even those who offer them bread and caresses appear to their unhappy distorted vision to hold wounding stones, treacherous daggers. See them flee and hide, turn and rend, cry aloud in anguish and desperation that their lives are but a curse and an oppression, and some are, in abject hopelessness, strangling themselves in the very chains they have wilfully and obstinately assumed."

"Well, at least they're saving work to the fool-killer," the man cried contemptuously.

"Don't scorn them," reproved the Shining Lady . . . pityingly. "They are such very sorrowful folk."

The Spirit of Understanding 33

"Now come a little farther and I will show you the very deepest hell that lies within this heaven."

Again she put her hand upon his and they passed with the swift irrelevance of a dream across the ages. And everywhere they beheld the strangest sights.

Men and women gathered up stones and bits of wood which they laboriously carved into hideous shapes; they melted metals and wrought from it monsters, they set up animals and serpents, and all manner of strange conceptions and fell down before them and worshipped. Fruits and flowers and corn and wine and oil were offered, sweet gums were smoked and lights lit by myriads, animals were gashed and burned; blood of bulls, and goats, and lambs was poured out in rivers, even their own veins were opened to swell the gory tide. They bound and disembowelled beautiful youths, they ravished women, they slit the throats of children, or cast them into flames. They scored their own flesh with knotted thongs, wore shirts of hair, starved and froze, fled from love, ran naked in the snows, plodded wearily for thousands of miles, wept and prayed and sang. They stripped away their wealth, put from them those nearest and dearest, strangled, robbed, slew, cursed, and died.

Now and then one of their fellows ran among them saying that these gods they worshipped wanted none of these things—that they were benignant gods, full of love; and the multitude

listened and gazed with dreamy bleared eyes, acclaimed this new doctrine, and crying "Love! Love!" turned upon their fellows and because their fellows worshipped love by turning to the east instead of to the west, or lifted one finger in blessing instead of two, or wore a scarf thrown over the left shoulder instead of the right, they cast one another to be mangled by wild beasts, crucified each other, burned, racked, branded, maimed, imprisoned, slaughtered. Then they bowed again before their gods and sang them hymns of praise.

The stench of those seas of blood, of those mountains of festering human flesh, the sight of those ever-flowing rivers of tears, the distortions, oppressions, despairs, the sound of the mighty voice of myriad anguish, turned the man sick and faint. He covered his face and cried hoarsely:

"Oh, what is it? What is it they do? . . ."

And the shining eyes of the Spirit of Understanding were dim and sad as she murmured:

"In ways such as these for untold ages they have sought for heaven, and have striven to earn a blissful immortality by making earth a hell for themselves and their companions! . . ."

IV

“**B**UT why?” asked John Smith.

His Shining Lady had overtaken him again. . . .

After that dark and terrifying dream which met him just as he had been about to take the third turning to the left, he had wakened suddenly to find himself at the corner he had been about to round. With nerves still quivering with the memory of those manifold weirdnesses shown him, he blinked and shook himself. He stared about. It was still evening, and the town looked just as he remembered it, though he seemed to have been wandering in that strange vision for long, long years.

**The Great
Strange
House**

What had Nelly thought of his absence, he wondered, and glanced at his watch as he hurried homewards. The watch said half-past six, and he had left the train he remembered at 6.20—still this might be another evening; might be another year. It seemed like it, but Nelly received him calmly and without question, so he had amazedly to imagine that those immense and terrible pictures of the ages had passed before his eyes between one step and another. It seemed incredible, but

some people said dreams were like that—came and went in an instant.

He had tried to tell Nelly about it after the children were put to bed, and she had listened aghast and puzzled, though he felt helpless to convey to her adequately the grotesqueness and terror of the things he had seen.

The vision of so much useless misery oppressed him. Dreading to be called upon to face it again he secretly feared to find his bright companion waiting for him the next evening. The walk home proved quite uneventful, however, and for many days he saw her no more.

Eventually the dread turned to an uneasy apprehension that she had abandoned him altogether, and he began to long for her re-appearance. His mind had been busy with meditations upon the curious delusions she had shown him, and he was disturbed by an inability to understand the cause of them.

"But why did they do it," was the question which recurred again and again. Was the world quite mad, then? It almost seemed so. Dim memories of early Bible readings rose in confirmation. Abraham offering Isaac on an altar, and then sacrificing the ram in the thicket instead. The dancing before a Golden Calf—terrible slaughters of other tribes who believed in other gods—the self gashings of the priests of Baal—passing children through the fire to Moloch. There were the martyrs too—and what the school-

books said about the Inquisition—the butcheries by the Mahommedans—the Smithfield fires—the hunted Covenanters—the cropped ears of the Quakers. . . .

“But *why?*”

When he saw the Bright Lady suddenly beside him again, as he neared the third turning, the question haunting him burst forth without preliminary explanation. She seemed to understand, however, and he hurried to develop his interrogation.

“. . . What put the idea into their minds in the first place? You wouldn't suppose any one sound in their heads would think of doing such things. Seems so silly, you know—just plain wickedness. Why did they want to do it? Anybody could see it was no good. Didn't any one ever tell them any better?—Why didn't *you* explain——”

The questions tumbled out, one atop the other. He was still—though the days had brought more calm—too moved, too puzzled to remember his shy reverence for his guide. His heart was straining to find the meaning of the horrors which had so torn and oppressed his spirit.

The Lady shook her head regretfully as she moved beside him.

“Ah!—how I *tried*—I went from one to the other, explaining, imploring. A few, just a very few in all the ages, seemed to hear my voice. But never very clearly,—not all that I wished to say. Those who did understand laboured hard

38 The Case of John Smith

to give the message, and some were listened to, but the crowd soon turned and twisted what had been said into an encouragement to continue more violently in the old miserable way—into a command to be more ruthless than ever."

"Infernal fools and brutes!" cried the typewriter angrily, clenching his hands as the memory of his vision came more vividly upon him.

"Ah, no," the gentle voice remonstrated. "Think of how they came to be like that. They couldn't altogether help it you know."

"Help it! I don't see——"

"You may see, if you wish—if you are not afraid to look again," she interrupted smilingly. "Have you the courage?"

He recoiled a little, remembering the last vision, but curiosity was strong in him, and after drawing his breath deeply he put his hand in the one outstretched to him.

Mists, and mists. . . .

Soft steaming vapours rolling and pouring over endless wastes of waters, curling away here and there to show low reefs barely lifted above the wash of tides. Reefs that crumbled at the edges a little as the waves gnawed them with restless gnashing of thunderous surf. Small beaches formed by this crumbling pushed the waters back inch by inch. In protected places floating salt weeds took hold, held the sands against the restless suck of the sea, and helped the struggle for mastery. . . .

Now and then a groaning broke forth somewhere in the tepid steam, as of a cosmic monster crushed by some intolerable pressure, and as the wind of that vast voice of pain tore the brooding wrack there could be seen huge dripping cliffs of blue oozy clay forced up from the ocean's bed into the grey vague day. Strange creatures of obscene and fantastic shapes were clinging to the viscous sides of these new islands. Creatures quivering, trembling in this strange intolerable light, in this new, thin, vaporous air so unlike the salt darkness of the ocean floor of their birth. . . .

Prodigious explosions burst forth in the mist. Red lights flared vaguely, and fiery hissings and boilings thickened the fogs with new vapour. More new islands had formed. Islands seared and inky black, barren and distorted as only fire and sudden quenching could have wrought of molten stone.

By slow degrees the land was coming to birth. And slowly, very slowly—(there seemed no time, only eternity, in those perpetual mists)—vague, formless, fantastic, jellied life crawled up from the waters, and clung half awash for ages. Growing accustomed finally to the more fluid atmosphere these grasped hold of the solider sands; found a rest from the endless pulse of sea. Climbed higher at last into the slowly forming marshes. Sprawled blind, indefinite, and formless in the weltering ooze. Stumbled against the other shapelessnesses, stumbled over them, and knew not whether a life was smothered in the stumbling. Slowly, in

this timelessness, shells were formed to protect the helpless jellies. Snouts were pushed out to suck food. Claws were grown to fight the other blind stumblers, eyes came out to see dangers; muscles grew to help a dull instinct for flight. Teeth, stings, poisons, prickles, spines, carapaces, wings, were put forth. There were dangers in this life to be prepared for, battles to be fought lest one perished in the midst of the effort to live. . . .

Ages lapsed, and vast creatures grew, who must be fed with vast foods, foods made up of a myriad other lives.

The mists thinned, the light increased. . . .

Prodigious dangers, prodigious impulsions forced to prodigious efforts to survive, to evolve means of escape, of protection, of satisfying appetite. On every hand were enemies. Only ruthlessness, cunning, incessant watchfulness, and suspicion enabled one to evade death, to stumble over others instead of being stumbled over.

Some definitely remained in the sea, some altogether upon the dry land: some used both. A few learned in mortal need to bound through the air, and grew integuments and wings to keep them there. Others climbed into the giant trees out of harm's way, and were safe except for the bigger flying things, except for the serpents, or a few of the lither cats.

In this comparative safety those who had climbed found time to consider other things a little

—to look about them, not having every instant to be on guard. They could look up as well as down, could see wider outlines, could observe the doings of others undisturbed by imminent dread. . . .

Ages again. . . . These tree dwellers had learned the use of weapons and of fire and were emboldened thereby to return to the earth, to take up their dwellings in caves. Banded together, armed with clubs and flints, with fire in their hands, they could meet and daunt all the other stumblers who had come up with them out of the slime but had travelled by so many varying paths. Fire and weapons, however, were useless against the thousand other dangers more terrifying than fellow stumblers; than tooth or claw.

What weapon could one use against darkness?—that terrifying murk in which one could not see, or flee, or fight the endless terrors hid within it. Of what avail were flint spears or hatchets or knotted clubs against those astounding roarings that burst forth at times overhead, accompanied by menacing glitterings?—glitterings that were no doubt the flashings of some immense weapon flourished by the roaring creatures up above;—a weapon with which sometimes they struck down the helpless beings beneath into a death of horrible suddenness.

How could one arm oneself against the mysterious pains, and chills and blights and fevers that came from no one knew where? Courage availed nothing against these.

And the dead—how terrifying and malignant they were! . . .

One moment just like every one else, and the next silent and strange and stiff; desiring apparently a number of things, things hard to guess at, and taking the frightfulest revenges on those who refused to give them what they wished. If one just left them in the corner of the cave or hut where they died they took on shapes and conditions to appal the most callous, and displayed their voiceless wrath in the infliction of pains and ills, and even death, upon neglectful survivors. So that it was best to flee and leave them the place to themselves, or else to give them some sort of new dwelling of their own, and sacrifice their jewels and horses, or their boats and weapons, sometimes their women and servants to keep them pacified and prevent their sending those silent plagues and curses of disease by which they so subtly and so terribly revenged themselves.

It was well to placate the dead, and all the other strange powers; well to flatter them, praise them; to offer gifts. One never knew what whims and caprices and awful potencies might dwell in even the simplest things—in trees, in clouds, the sun and moon, serpents, tigers, elephants, even mere wood and stone. After all one was so helpless before these mysteries. And if one man neglected the observances the angry potency was not discriminating. It might punish the whole tribe with strange agues, with horrible pustules, with

swollen glands and death. So that this neglectful one must be forced by every means, even torture, to do as others did; make the same offerings, sing the same hymns, recite the reiterated flatteries, lest all his innocent fellows should suffer for his sins.

"You see, now," said the Shining Lady to the man beside her, who was wonderingly considering the vision "why you should feel only pity and not anger for these timid souls who so maltreated their fellows. The memory of all their terrors, their dangers, lies still so deeply embedded in their minds, in the very fibres of their flesh."

"I guess that's right," John Smith admitted. "Poor chaps! They didn't know any better, did they?"

"No. They knew no better. They were like children shut at night into a strange great house in which there were endless rooms and passages, and huge cellars and attics, whose intricacies it was impossible to guess. A house where curious things happened in the terrifying gloom—sudden glances of light that came and went, great crashes and rumblings above and below—voices, echoes, confused murmurs—things that in the darkness seemed to reach out from no where to grasp them by the hair and drag them shrieking from the other children. Fingers invisible pinched and buffeted them, strangled, crushed, tormented. . . .

"No wonder the poor little minds were filled with confusion, with strange imaginings, with frenzied fears. No wonder they often turned upon one

another with blows believing that they were fighting the invisible terrors which surrounded them. Here and there one bolder than the rest would step into another room, would insist upon finding the sources of these affrighting manifestations, would endeavour to light a torch, to explore the cellars, climb to the attics. Generally the other children tried to prevent this, they struck or bound the bold one, because who knew what cruel, mysterious monsters he might thus affront, might stir up to hideous activity. . . . ”

“I expect that’s just what I’d have thought if I’d been one of those poor little beggars,” the man interrupted sympathetically.

“No—I think you’d have been one of those who insisted, in spite of blows, upon lighting torches and going to see what the noises really were,” she replied kindly, and John Smith blushed with pride and pleasure.

“There always were a few who did, and they usually came back to say that it was really a good and noble house; day was beginning to shine into the windows, and the dangerous forces were things quite easily avoided if one would only take pains. Unhappily they were never quite believed, and most of the children still huddled and trembled in the darkness, weeping that they should be in so unhappy a place, and longing to find another where there should be no tears nor fears for evermore.”

“Poor little fools,” said John Smith.

V

“AND what happened next?”

John Smith and the Spirit were passing together again—this time over the snow, for the winter had set in early—toward that magic third turning where all the visions came. It was quite dark, and the wind wailed along the half frozen creek that wound across the sere marshes, but John Smith found life so interesting in the midst of all these surprising new ideas that he forgot to anathematize the weather, and his Bright Teacher seemed subject to no physical discomforts.

**The Iron
Boxes**

“Oh, more and more,” she replied, “the dwellers in the house learned to know its size and its position in the surrounding country, and they explored nearly all its passages, and learned something of the beauties it contained, letting in more and more of the growing day.”

“Well, then, weren’t they happy?”

“Happier, no doubt, but you know what the world is.”

“Yes, I guess we’ve most of us still got the idea that this is a Vale of Tears—as they say in the churches—and that we could do a lot better some-

wheres else. But I'm interested in the chaps with the torches. I'd like to hear more about them. What sort of thing do you mean exactly by torches?"

"Oh, the people who try to find out the truth. Almost anything about which you are ignorant you are either afraid of, or have concerning it dangerously mistaken ideas. Consider the Atlantic Ocean before a Columbus lit a torch to show the world the way across, it was a big vague terror, full of mists and monsters, and great gulfs that sucked ships down to death. . . . And then there was the marsh ghost that came, pale and impalpable, and breathed upon men, clotting their blood with cold and shaking them with recurring fevers. A vampire draining their lives of blood, of force and will. She was a gruesome spectre until men found the ogress was only a tiny and teasing mosquito from whom they could defend themselves with just a bit of netting. Half the ogres of our lives are really no bigger, no more powerful than gnats, if we could only see them as they are—get them into the right focus."

"Guess that's so too," admitted her hearer ponderingly.

"One of the worst of our monsters is Dirt," she continued. "He devours so many. Drags away babies from their weeping mothers, and mothers from shrieking children. Crawls into homes and crunches and mangles bread-winners. Tears out the eyes of thousands, leaving them

helpless in the dark. Strikes wholesome flesh with boils and ulcers and festerings. Gluts himself with whole populations, and makes cities the gaunt homes of wolves and jackals. He seems unconquerable when he breathes his filthy, fetid breath upon the races, and yet the St. George who slays that dragon needs neither sword nor armour. All the weapons he requires are soap and water and a broom. The brute crawls helplessly away at the sight of them."

John Smith laughed at the fancy of a St. George carrying a pail in one hand and a bar of soap in the other, and wondered how the Saint would look in that guise on the English gold pieces.

The third corner was near and he hoped he might see another picture. Somehow the things he looked at with his eyes were easier to understand, though they were often so strange, and he enjoyed unravelling their significance in the intervals between the Shining Lady's visits.

The delicate touch of her hand fell upon his like the warm radiance of a sunbeam, and he found himself in that beautiful wide landscape again, walking beside her, and staring around with eager interest.

As before the children played gaily and seemed glad of the fair world in which they found themselves.

"The kids seem to like it—don't they?" he commented contentedly.

"Wise little souls!" the Lady replied tenderly,

“they see it all in the true magic light. A pebble, a handful of sand, a flower, or a bright bird is enough to give them happiness. They know what place they are in——

‘Heaven lies about him in his infancy,’

you remember.”

John Smith didn’t remember. Wordsworth had not been included in his course at the School of Stenography, but he thought it a pleasant suggestion.

“But why do they change as they grow older?” he demanded, for he saw it was only the children whose eyes were properly focussed and who could discern essential values.

“Because very soon their elders begin to tie them into those bonds and chains which they have fashioned for themselves, begin to scoff at the bright shells and stones which the children thought so beautiful and valuable, and drag them into the iron boxes which they have fashioned as dwellings for their own souls. . . .

‘Shades of the prison house

Begin to close about the growing boy’—

And when he is once locked in he very rarely escapes.”

And in truth John Smith saw everywhere children drawn away from their play and, with

wondering, piteous faces, regarding the chains they must wear; saw them urged to build for themselves similar dwellings to those inhabited by the older members of the population.

He was extremely interested in observing these iron boxes in which the people of this place mostly lived. They were all small, rigid, rectangular. There were no openings to admit light or air, they were almost sound proof, and far too small to admit of any free movement on the part of their owners.

As the children passed out of childhood one and all were set at the task of construction, and though they seemed reluctant to undertake it, yet for the most part they yielded to the urgent admonitions of the elders and built these dreary cubes and shut themselves into them for life. Here and there a young girl, or an adolescent boy lingered dreamily and regretfully at the entrance, wistfully regarding the bright world they were leaving, but at last they went within and closed and locked the door.

"Well, for heaven's sake, why do they do it?" the typist demanded indignantly.

"Oh, not for heaven, but for hell's sake," the Shining Lady's ruthless voice replied. "Those iron boxes are built of the old memories and fears and bitternesses of the hell from which man has climbed. That hell of anarchy, chaos, and blind battle for mere place and breath. They still remember all the early dreads of the Great Strange House and refuse to realize that the noises and

lights and threatening shadows have been explained and understood at last, that the night of terror has waned and morning dawned. So because of the old inherited misgivings and mistrusts they shut themselves away from their fellows and from the beauties and sweetnesses of the world and live hardly and sadly in these narrow jails. Live in them, and die in them."

The man ached with pity for the loss and sorrow self-inflicted by so many.

"But don't any of them escape from the prison?" he asked.

"Yes, indeed!" the Lady answered cheerfully. "There would be no hope of heaven for all at last if it were not for the wise few. See here is one who went in, but found his box too narrow and could not bear it. He was always dreaming of the stones he had played with in his childhood. He had been too shy and ignorant to explain to the others the beautiful things he had seen in the stones, but the dreams continually tormented him and he could not rest at all in his prison. So at last he unlocked his door and stole out to look for his playthings. When he had found them again he cut away the outside and to his unspeakable delight discovered they contained just the lovely gods and goddesses, the fair nymphs, the noble men and tender women whose faces and forms he had seen glimmering out through their rough surfaces as he played with them in his wise early years. He shouted for pure joy; others peered from their cells at the

sound, explaining that they too had had the same visions, and thus encouraged came out to join him and discovered delicious wonders concealed in other stones. So they called themselves sculptors, had many happy hours together, and spent quite a good part of their lives outside the boxes.

"Look over there," she continued, pointing to others who though they were adults still played with stones. "Those when they were little children heaped their pebbles into rings and mounds, and were greatly disappointed that the grown-ups couldn't understand what charming things they were making. Now you see they are still heaping their stones into the temples and dwellings that were obvious to their childish eyes; trying to make more clear the splendid outlines that showed so plain to them through the marble and granite. And see how by cutting away the concealing surfaces they display the flowers and leaves, the curling vines, the birds and squirrels, the quaint faces, the gay little monsters hidden underneath the surface of the stones, things that were longing to come forth and show themselves."

"I declare I never thought about all those pretty things being shut up in marble and granite and trying to get out," said the typewriter amazedly. "A stone was just a stone to me. . . . And what are those other chaps over there busy about?"

"They are those who were always hearing in everything they touched faint hidden whispers

endeavouring to reach them, but so muffled and weak it was impossible to understand what was said. It was trying to guess what those voices were that would not let them rest easy in their jails. So they too broke forth and laid their ear to the trees, and to brass and copper and silver, and to many other substances, in all of which they heard those whispers saying, 'Let me out—help me out—I want to speak!' And after much effort and searching they found the hidden voices which told them—oh! beautiful, ineffable things. Told them what the little brooks said at night in the silences of the forest; what the sea sang of; all the loud and soft words the winds call across the world, and what the flowers meant to tell when they breathed out scents, and all the syllables of the infinite murmur of the leaves. There was hardly any mystery that these music voices couldn't reveal: the sound of blood in the veins, the beating of hearts, the trickle of tears, cries of pain, the silent ecstasy of love. All those longings and despairs, those tendernesses and aspirations—the trees and the metals knew the words of all of them, and if men would listen, would let them speak, they would open the shut places, give speech to the silences."

"Why, that's so," said John Smith delightedly—he loved music—"it's just what music does. Sort of says the things you know but you can't think of the words to tell it with. . . . And the painters? I suppose they help too?"

"Of course they do. Watch what they are about. They take chalk and bits of black lead and inks and dyes and coloured earths and with them they are trying to show the others how lovely everything really is. They are explaining how beautifully the trees grow, and how wonderful is each leaf and flower-petal; how the waves curl over, how the light shines on the grass, what amazing tints there are in the eyes of children, in the hair and skins of women, what shadows play on the mountainside, how the wind runs across the wheat, how the mists enfold the distances. They are always calling and crying to those others to look how fair and lovable everything seems to eyes willing to see."

"Good for them! They are explaining heaven, ain't they?"

". . . Explaining heaven! . . . And those others scribbling so hard upon their papers—they are explaining too. Are trying to tell people what is in other people's hearts. They are writing messages from those who don't know how to say what they mean to those who have never stopped to listen. You see most of us just see creatures walking about with their hearts and minds quite hidden in unrevealing flesh, but these—they have very keen eyes—can behold what is passing underneath that thick covering, and they clear up a thousand mysteries and bafflements. They make us understand what comely souls are often concealed in unsightly bodies. They find voices

for the dumb, and speech for the helpless and oppressed, and songs for the mute, and translate to hearts that have not comprehended the language of other hearts. They even make us listen to all the sorrows and struggles and fears and hopes and nobilities of our fellow animals as well as of our fellow men, so that we grow to pity and understand and love. Theirs is a beautiful work—when they are true to their calling—for they are the reconcilers and interpreters; putting away our ignorance and fears and mistrusts, helping us to walk in the clear mellow light of knowledge, wherein the dark paths grow easy and safe.”

As they passed on their way John Smith saw a very old man lying on his chest in among brambles, weeds, and thistles looking intently into a tiny hole in the ground.

“What’s the matter with the old chap?” he asked, stopping to wonder. “Off his nut?”

“That is Henri Fabre,” the Lady explained. “Perhaps many of the folk living in the iron boxes do think him half mad, for during a large part of his eighty years he has been doing just that—lying on the ground watching beetles and bees and scorpions and flies. But he has been very happy and interested, has discovered thousands of delicious and amusing secrets, has watched endless love affairs and dramas, and the world has contented him very well. For you see this heaven we live in is a place of myriad delights and interests. If you look up into the endless deeps of vastness,

or down into the endless deeps of smallness it is always the same; you can never exhaust the discoveries and amusements prepared for us."

"But that don't seem like work," said John Smith doubtfully, "that's just play."

"Ah!" cried the Shining Lady. "You have said it. All work is play if you'd only see it. There's a man fishing for stars with a telescope; some people call that work, but he could find no more delightful play. And here's one looking for crystals in the stones, and that one has taken a drop of water out of the ditch and with a glass sees thousands of beautiful queer creatures of all shapes and colours living in it, all very busy and strong and interested. Look at that one over there with a tuning-fork—he's Marconi picking up invisible forces out of the air and the earth and making them talk to him. Stephen Watts is catching the delicate fairy wreaths of steam out of his mother's tea kettle, putting it into a cage, and persuading it to turn a million wheels. Ben Franklin over there is at a boy's game of kite flying, with it pulling the lightning down out of the skies. He is persuading it to stop being just a terrible great fiery sword reaching out of heaven to stab helpless folk and is teaching it instead to play at pulling our wagons for us, is inducing it to pretend to be little suns to light the darkness of our nights; to be our messengers who run on errands. Can't you see that all this is just a great splendid playing—not work? Work is only a thing done dully,

stupidly, reluctantly. The moment it's done cheerfully, ardently, interestedly, it instantly turns into play."

"Oh, that's all very well," the man said a little resentfully. "They're the big fellows, who have got brains and can do big things; but how about us little ones who have to do the stupid jobs?"

"What do you call stupid? Look at this black hole in the ground. What do you imagine those men are going down into it for? It is really an Aladdin's Cave they've found, for in it are stored the most incredible wonders and treasures.

"Suppose one day you decided you'd take a spade and dig for treasure, and after a while you reached a place deep down where suddenly you came upon a thousand suns that no one had seen for a hundred thousand years. Suppose that in this hole was stored up the force of millions and millions of horses, besides rainbows beyond counting, the scents of a myriad flowers, and all sorts of wizard powers that you couldn't at first quite understand. Wouldn't you be overwhelmed with delight and excitement?

"Suppose you brought up bits of those suns and set them on your hearth and warmed yourself and your children while the winter raged outside; lit your house with the sunlight that everybody thought had died into darkness ages and ages ago. Suppose you took the force of those suns that had raised whole oceans into the air, that had created great winds and hurricanes, and using that force

all over again, you lifted huge stones into place to make you mountainous buildings, had harnessed it to carriages and driven all round the world, had made it into new winds to blow your ships across all the seas. Suppose you found you could dip your garments into those rainbows and go like a rainbow yourself, and hang those iris hues upon your walls—could perfume your life with all the scents of all the flowers that had bloomed through a thousand years, could find the sleep of magic poppies, the virtues of the healing herbs.

. . . How very poor Aladdin's Cave with its little store of gems and gold would seem beside yours. Some people—stupid people—might say you were simply a dirty coal miner, but you would know better. You would say, 'I am the greatest and best of wizards; I am the reviver of dead suns.' You would say, 'Oh, stupid folk! Don't you see that there is nothing stupid in the world? Everything—if you could only see it—even digging coal—is a tingling wonder and splendour.'"

John Smith gaped in admiration and surprise.

"And everything is like that," continued his teacher. "All that is necessary is to see things as they really are—to come out of the iron box and look at the world as it is, not as those people shut up in soundless darkness foolishly have agreed it to be."

"They are precious idiots," he exclaimed disgustedly. "Why don't they come out?"

"I showed you why. The memories of the past

cramp their spirits, blur their sight. See how the poets sing their songs before the shut doors and cannot make those within hear—how the artists and discoverers knock furiously upon the stuffy rigid little cabins calling to the cramped souls inside, 'Come out and see—everything is beautiful and good,' and get only dim muffled answers of 'Go away. We will not look or hear. We are afraid. Leave us alone.'"

"Do they never come?" was his regretful question.

"Oh, yes. Most of them stay within, but more and more come out as time goes on. Very often the long darkness has so dimmed their eyes that they never see the full light, but a little of its radiance warms and irradiates their poor frozen souls. Often their limbs are so cramped by the narrow walls of the prison that they always remain stunted and misshapen, and yet they move. Their ears are dulled by the long silence, but some lovely murmurs of the world's music faintly stir their chilled hearts. . . . Look—Look!" she cried gaily. "See, there is a prison door ajar; another one comes out. . . ."

Some call had penetrated one of the iron boxes, and the man within peered out timidly, gazing slowly about, half inclined to retreat again, but the dusk had come down as they watched and his fancy was caught by the stars shining overhead. They had always been there, but he had never looked at them before. Long and long he gazed,

and at last crept quite out of the door to study them more at his ease; he even asked a few questions of a passer-by who was familiar with such matters and was told the names of the planets and the constellations. The names fell pleasantly on his ear, so that he sought further knowledge of their movements and their nature, and while he was engaged in this way the night wind brought him the scent of flowers and the voice of a singer; he breathed deeply of the sweet outer air and lent a pleased ear to the song.

A temple built by one of the players-with-stone attracted his attention next, and somewhat uncertainly he ventured a little way from his box to examine it more closely. The noble outlines against the starry sky delighted him, and he lingered to study all the beautiful wreaths and adornments which the carver had seen hidden in his materials and had helped with his tools to escape from their concealment. So absorbed had the man been in this new interest he had forgotten his box, but suddenly he recalled it and was hurrying back when his eye wandered to the great landscape before him and he paused to admire the dreaming world swimming in crystal darkness. At last he stretched out his arms, moved his limbs, and felt the large freedom of his environment. Then looking at those black and cruel habitations scattered thickly all about, and at his own narrow box from which he had so recently emerged, full of wonder he cried:

60 The Case of John Smith

"Is it possible that I have wilfully lived there all my life? How strange! . . . And all the while these lovely things were waiting for me."

"More fool you," shouted John Smith, but the Shining Lady said in gentle rebuke:

"And where did *you* live when I called to you? You went to and fro with your soul in an iron case seeing none of these things. You thought only the little coloured stones dug out of mines were gems and begrudged others their possession of them, never noting the jewels that flew and floated and swam and hung about you; all yours. Because you had fantastically decided to consider only those pictures which were painted by other men's hands and must be bought with money, you closed the windows of your little box upon the endless pictures that glowed above your head, under your feet, on every side, wherever your eye turned. You were envious and resentful because your employer and his associates could buy a little piece of canvas far beyond your means, while you were having thrust upon you glorious visions day and night, never twice the same, changing with every hour, with every season—pictures such as the greatest artists of all the world would have given the last drop of their blood to be able to create. . . .

"You had a thousand beauties and joys at your hand always ready for the taking, but you would not care, would not see, and why? Because they

were a free, joyous, endless gift: because you had not bought them with money! . . .”

As John Smith turned the third corner alone he felt himself still blushing, and was glad to be going back to Nelly.

VI

THE two were starting on a journey to a place very far from Lonelyville. It had come about through John Smith's remarking as they walked together one evening that after
A Japanese Garden all a good deal depended on whether one was lucky or not—whether a man had a chance—and his companion asked what he meant by a chance.

"Oh, I guess you know what I mean," he said confusedly, feeling his lack of power of elucidating any elusive thought. ". . . If things come your way—if you have room to spread out—ain't shut up in little mean conditions where it don't seem worth while to try."

"Do you think there are any conditions so bad that it ceases to be worth while to endeavour to make them better?" she asked.

"Well, yes, I do," he replied rather doggedly. "Lots of folk are born that way. Everything is so ugly round them, and they don't see any chance of ever getting out of the poor sort of place they're in, ever having any scope, don't you know, so they just say, 'Oh, what's the use? I've got no show.' And they just give up and don't care how things

are. Give them something big and promising and they'd be as different as could be."

"Did you ever see a Japanese Garden?" the Shining Lady asked, turning her eyes upon him.

"No. How'd I ever see a thing like that?" he asked. It had been rather a trying day at the office. He felt somewhat cross and depressed, and wondered at the sudden change of subject. He had wanted to have it explained why some lives seemed so much larger and more ample than his own.

"I'll show you one if you wish," she promised indulgently. "You may find it has a bearing after all on what you were talking of."

He was somewhat embarrassed to see that she had divined his secret discontent and he laid his hand in hers without further comment, having learned that the pictures she could show were far more original and surprising than anything he and Nelly ever saw at the cinematograph theatres.

He was sure they had come a long distance though how it had been done he did not discern, for it seemed to have all happened at the very instant he felt that warm, light touch upon his fingers.

Instead of the dark streets heaped with hummocks of dirty snow this was spring that he saw, for the sunny hills were clothed in the fresh delicate green of new leaves. There was just the same sky and sunlight he had always known; the hills

and valleys were hills and valleys of the usual sort; the trees grew and the rivers ran as at home, but for some reason he couldn't define he experienced an almost startling sense of strangeness and unfamiliarity in the landscape. He had never been out of America, but he knew at once this was not America. The same topographical outlines, the same light, and the same sort of foliage made a quite new effect on his senses, as two faces with exactly the same number of features, the same blonde or brunette colouring, the same general contour will make the most deeply contrasting effects on the eye and the mind of the observer. He wondered if countries had individualities like persons. It was an idea new to his untravelled experience.

He found this country's individuality quite entrancing. There was a fairy-like aspect about it, as of a landscape seen in a pleasant dream where everything is vapoury and elusive; something arch and fantastic that pleased him greatly.

Near them stood a cluster of unpainted fragile wooden buildings with tiled up-curving roofs; buildings very grey and old, and yet retaining in their mild silvery hoariness a delicate neat freshness of aspect that charmed him to an indulgent affection and tenderness. Under the thick old trees where the buildings were gathered was a large walled pool from which a giant bronze bowl rose, shaped like a flower, and out of this the water dropped with slow tinkling into the basin below.

A frail wooden bridge with a high delicate arch spanned the pool.

Before these temples—his companion explained that they were temples—the land curved gently down to a broad river that flowed swiftly, yet glassily, and following his guide John Smith entered a flat-bottomed, square-ended, unpainted barge propelled with long oars by two little brown men clothed in dark blue cotton hose and blue jerkins, on the back and breast of which were large strange white characters in a white circle.

“Everyone here wears upon his coat an advertisement of his occupation,” said the Lady. “It’s a wonderfully convenient arrangement.”

The current carried them forward with scarce any exertion on the part of the boatmen, save when the powerful jade-green stream curved strongly yet noiselessly under the overhanging wooded cliffs, or where it divided into two or three channels among the shrubby flats. After a time the woods fell away, giving place to tilled fields; they passed beneath a light bridge with red railings and drew to shore near a small town.

A grey, dusty, mud-plastered place they found it, whose streets twinkled underfoot with micaceous particles; with endless crumbs of broken, multi-coloured pottery. For this was a potters’ town: smeared, smothered with dull-hued paste; huddling and stumbling over heaps of kaolin; clustering around towering arid ovens. It slopped with

ever-flowing clay-coloured water, was powdered with creeping, irresistible clayey dust.

More brown men dressed in blue dragged hand-carts piled with straw-packed dishes and bowls. Others ran through the narrow streets carrying balanced on one shoulder boards laden with unbaked cups and pots. At every doorway shelves were ranged with new wet shapes fresh from the wheel, and within doors spun the disks from which in quick magic, under the seemingly careless touch of the potters, delicate shapes rose out of formless viscid lumps of paste.

Boys sat cross-legged upon powdery benches dipping brushes into saucers of liquid, their swift strokes outlining upon unbaked surfaces flights of birds, curling lotus leaves, silhouettes of mountains, branches of pine or plum,—all these seemingly unheedful of the loud poundings roaring about them, of the straining, washing, kneading of the pervasive, sticky kaolin.

Following his guide John Smith crunched across the brittle refuse, skirted the parched ovens, waded through glutinous puddles, evaded the splashings of the loud stamps beating the obstinate clay to soupy softness. No one looked up, or appeared to notice the newcomers. All busily created fragile forms from the inchoate stuff, adorned these forms, gave them to the fires, and brought them forth again glistening, impervious, beautified, transformed to delicate translucency for the pleasure and uses of the world. From out those busy

fingers poured a stream of vessels to hold the heaped snowy rice, the pale amber tea, the mild wine brewed from the rice with which man refreshed his body after his labours; or vessels to contain the sprays of blossom with which he refreshed his heart and mind.

The hair, the skins, the eyelashes of the workers were grey with the pulverized refuse, not to be denied or evaded; their faces and garments were smeared with cakings of the dried earth, their hands and feet sodden with the humid kaolin out of which were wrought their miracles. Men, clothing, houses, utensils were subdued to the one dull hue, as if the clay out of which they created reached up to absorb them again even while they lived.

"This hardly seems a home for sweetness and beauty, does it?" said the Shining Lady, as they passed down a narrow by-street to pause before a high barrier of close-knitted bamboos. She laid her hand upon a low door in the woven wall, and following her, John Smith found himself in a little silent place of calm.

He stood staring at first, brushing his hand across his eyes:—was something the matter with his sight, or had he lost his sense of proportion, of focus?

The enclosure was small—not more than forty feet or so, either way—yet he had a sense of landscape: an impression of forests and mountains; of broad vistas of a country lit with rivers and lakes.

It seemed as if one were looking out across a wide view of wild and lovely country through the small end of a telescope, narrowing all its features within a small circle while every object showed clear, retaining its own values.

"What is it?" he stammered, gaping. "It's so queer. Looks so big and yet so little."

The Lady laughed her little musical expression of pleasure.

"It's one of the most wonderful things in the world," she explained. "A Japanese garden. There are hundreds of thousands of them in this country, of all sorts. Some of them cover acres; some are not more than two feet square; some are only ten inches each way. You are seeing one of the most beautiful of them, but all are lovely and amazing. The dweller in this garden owns one of these potteries here, and he has closed off a little space from the dusty town with a wall of plaited bamboos. He has only to step through a gate from the powder and clatter of his surroundings to live at once among the green hills of peace."

"But how did he manage to make it look like this?" John Smith demanded, still puzzled, still vainly struggling to readjust his sense of focus.

"Well, he had the desire, and then he took pains. He was wise enough not to complain that his surroundings were discouraging; of having no space nor means to carry out his ideas. He refused to feel that as his fate and duties set him in a world

of mud and dust and broken bits he must simply suffer and starve for the things his heart craved. Instead he made for himself in this narrow limit a great noble outlook on which to feast his eyes and imagination. Forty feet was enough. It was only a question of scale."

The two went—one silently and plunged in meditation—on a tour of exploration through the miniature landscape. They crossed the minute bridges, climbed the wild little gorges where the adventurous small trees clung to the crags, shading glens where white torrents gushed and tumbled in the gloom, or where threads of waterfalls sang and wavered in the sun. Fairy mountain meadows were spangled with minuscule blossoms; forests of dwarfed pines and gnarled maples clothed the rugged mountainsides.

"I feel as if I'd suddenly grown a hundred feet high," grumbled the traveller.

"Yes, it does give one a curious sense of being a lumbering giant," his guide admitted, "but these gardens are not meant to be much lived in. They are meant to look at. These people are passionately fond of wild scenery. They go on endless pilgrimages, make the most fatiguing climbs to see famous views, and of course they don't demand to walk through everything they see. Their joy, and our joy, in such a view is simply to look at it; to let its beauty heal and bless and inspire. So when they make a landscape for their home they don't contemplate constantly

tramping over it, they sit and meditate and are happy, as they were happy and still on the mountain top."

"See, there," she whispered a moment later as they reached the farther limits of their exploration. "Now you can understand what such a garden means to its owner."

A delicate, fragile Japanese house formed one corner of the quiet domain. The unpainted screens, with their multitudinous panes of paper which formed the wall of the owner's study, were slid back, leaving one side of the room wholly open to the garden. The master potter, a slim man in a grey silk robe, sat upon the elastic white straw mats of the floor before a table two feet high. This lacquered table was strewn with papers, supported a writing-stone, several brushes, and some sticks of perfumed ink. No other furniture was visible, save in a recess a hanging pictured scroll, and a delicate grey vase containing two purple irises and a flowering branch arranged with a curious arresting art. The room was empty, and yet not bare. Its graceful proportion, its frail purity and simplicity seemed all that was needed for the habitation of a tranquil soul.

The grey man rubbed a stick of his scented ink in the water of his writing-stone, took a bamboo-handled brush, dipped it in the fluid, and rapidly upon a long roll of semi-transparent paper wrote strange ideographs full of beauty, in columns which grew from right to left. He folded the long

sheet and slid it into a narrow envelope which opened at one end. This addressed, he fell into a muse, gazing long and tenderly upon the miniature outlook before him—seeming not to be aware of any intruders within its green silence. After a time he drew another sheet toward him, and again dipping his brush he sketched a leaning bough, a shadowy towering peak; made a picture of his small lake, hinting its outlines through a mist which vaguely allowed one to see a vanishing flight of wild geese silhouetting themselves for a moment against the half-veiled disk of a rising moon.

"It is here this man writes his business letters," the Lady explained, "here he finds the inspiration for the decorations of his pottery. He wisely does not wait to be rich in order to live. He does not flee from the scene of his labours to look for beauty, to find peace and refreshment. He knows that peace and beauty exist everywhere on earth; that one has only to bring together cleanliness and simplicity, to set aside one small corner of the place one occupies and arrange it as one wishes to evoke the loveliness that lies about us ready always for use, waiting only for us to see and understand."

"I guess this garden cost something to make, all the same," John Smith objected in a whisper. He was reluctant to speak aloud, for he had a sensation of invisibility—the designer seemed so wholly unaware of being watched.

"Not more," his companion corrected, "than many folk spend every year upon a two weeks' vacation, endeavouring to fly from dull ugliness and find new inspiration. This man keeps his change and vacation always with him. There are thousands of gardens in this country no bigger than a window box—gardens made and owned by day labourers who live upon a few cents a day. Some of the gardens are in tiny baskets: a mossy bank, a small old tree spreading above a winding river of minute pebbles, a few tumbled boulders reproduced by stones picked up by the wayside. Sometimes they will build a strange fairy landscape with a handful of moss arranged around a broken jagged fragment of wood which curiously simulates a bold cliff. Yet the little basket-garden will give a delicious intimation of wild freshness and freedom such as we search for far afield on a larger scale to evoke renewal of our touch with nature."

"Funny sort of folks—these Japs," John Smith meditated aloud as they passed from the still garden. "Seem rather like children to me."

"It's exactly what they are," his companion commented as she quietly closed the bamboo gate. "Eternal children!"

"You've seen your boys on the sea beach hunting stones and shells, building sand castles? To you these things seem dull and meaningless, but the boys find them full of magic. To them they suggest eternal wonders and spaces. To them these

stones are alive and real and beautiful. The Japanese never lose their sense of magic. The wonders and the spaces are always present in their minds, and they make little pictures of them in a box, in a basket, in a three-foot-square back yard, and live through them into the glories of the large world.

"A girl-child's doll isn't a mere length of sawdust bag with a wax mask at the end of it. To her it is an image of love, of tender helpless appeal to her instincts of brooding protection. It is a symbol of deep emotions which she lacks words to express: a symbol of all that life and love is to mean to her later on. To you a whip and a horn are simply a whip and a horn, but to the boy-child they symbolize power and knightly adventure, the chase and war, horse and hound, and a call to the high blood of his youth.

"An apron rolled into rough semblance of a little soft body makes magic for the girl as effectively as the finest doll ever fashioned. A branch from a willow bush, the rolled top of a cardboard box from the ash can brings to the boy all the trappings of chivalry.

"You thought your eyes had lost their power of focussing correctly when you first looked at that garden," she went on after a moment's silence. "But in reality they had just found it. You found again what you had lost in the blindness of your daily life—what most of us lose . . . the power of right seeing. We enclose ourselves in the

iron boxes and forget all the happy things lying close to our hands which we have only to pick up, arrange, and use to make our lives beautiful."

And with that word the scene and the Shimmering Lady vanished. After which John Smith went home.

VII

"WILL you come and look at another picture?" the Spirit said next evening at the third turning.

"Sure!" agreed Smith. "What's it to be this time?"

"Oh, more about that 'chance' we were talking of last night," she smiled.

The
Opportunity
of Exile

"I think I can show where chance lies."

A touch of her hand set them in a wild, rough land. The man looked about him and shivered a little, though in reality he felt none of the cold of those fields of snow stretching away—as it seemed—illimitably into the dusk. It was a region locked in frozen desolation. Only a slow icy wind moved through the coming night across that livid expanse of arctic landscape. No water ran, no trees waved naked limbs. The low growth was buried deep beneath the heaped whiteness of the white winter covering, now turning grey and sinister in the early darkness.

The two passed swift and noiseless through the gloom to a small settlement of rude houses huddled in the drifts, as if they crouched with lifted shoulders against the cruel oppression of winter.

Faint gleams of scant light shone from the little curtainless windows, and the wayfarers stooped to look within at these unfortunates flung by fate so far from the circle of kindly climes into such desperate plight.

For the most part the interiors upon which they silently spied proved but little less gloomy and dreary than the world without. Low, unkempt, squalid, bare of all but the merest necessities of human existence, it seemed natural to find the inmates of these bleak dwellings sunk in dull animalism. They lay and snored in the dirty bunks, or gathered at their coarse meals and ate wolfishly. A few played roughly at games of chance. Others crouched idle, and brooded with fierce and bitter faces. The long imprisonment, the scant daylight of the far northern winter sapped their courage, drained them of hope and purpose.

"Well, Lonelyville looks like 'The Great White Way' next this," the man said pityingly. "What put it into their heads to come to such a place—and where are we at anyhow?"

"They don't come of their own will," the Spirit explained. "Though men have gone willingly to worse places; but always in search of fortune, in hope of fame, and with the intention of soon returning to pleasanter zones. These poor folk have no hope of return, no prospect of fortune. They freeze and wither and rot, far from all they love and desire. This is Kamchatka, and these are Russian exiles."

"I've heard about them," the man cried ruthfully. "But somehow you don't realize how hard it is till you see it."

"It is difficult," his companion admitted, "to realize the sufferings of others until your own eyes make you aware of it. No doubt the people who send these poor folk to this place have no vivid sense of what is suffered here: if they did, they might hesitate to approve it—might shiver and relent a little in their own warm, gay, well-lit houses as they reflect upon the huddled, hopeless exiles."

"Damn them!—they must be a cold-blooded, brutal lot," the man cried angrily.

"Not all of them, by any means," she corrected. "You'd probably find most of those who condemned these exiles to misery really kindly persons who would not willingly see any one in pain. Only they don't see them, and their imaginations are dull, and they think very little about it. Most of our cruelties are the result of the want of thought rather than the want of heart."

"But why were they sent here, anyhow?" the man asked.

"Some were criminals, in the ordinary sense: many were exiled for political crimes. Just the old blind stumblers we saw in the slime in the beginning—pushing and crawling over one another, biting, crushing, seeking light and warmth and room for themselves, hardly knowing whom or what they defeated and effaced in the struggle, in the desire to survive, to grow.—"

78 The Case of John Smith

"Well, I think folks ought to look where they're going," grumbled Smith.

The Spirit led him to another hut.

"This is what we have come so far to see," she said, directing his attention to still another small uncurtained window.

Within the cramped barren chamber sat a man young and strong, his face alight, his back unbent, his attention alert. On his rude table lay rough bits of pottery, odd baskets, crude weapons, implements chipped from stone. He studied these with deep interest, labelling, arranging, sorting, comparing.

"Who is the chap?—what's he doing?" Smith enquired in a whisper. Those they observed in these strange varied expeditions seemed so unaware of the travellers' existence that he felt embarrassed at the sound of his own voice.

"A political exile. Arrested for some boyish outbreak at the University when he was nineteen, and having no powerful friends to plead for mercy he was sent to this wild place to herd with criminals, with the broken and hopeless."

"But he doesn't look broken and hopeless, does he?"

"No. He has been here for years, but though only a boy when he came he has not sought refuge and distraction in vice, has not lost his strength in sullen idleness. He has had no books, no education, no encouragement, but his eager active mind

has sought interest in the life about him. Whenever chance favoured he has studied the wild tribes who live here in default of books. He has learned their tongues, collected their songs and legends, gathered and preserved their primitive arts, and though he has no hope for the future he has become an accomplished ethnologist as far as opportunity has allowed."

"But what good will that do him?"

"It keeps him sane and active, helps him to grow, fills his empty life with warm interests."

"Poor chap! I don't see that *he's* got a chance," Smith exclaimed regretfully as they turned to go.

"Wait," said the Spirit of Understanding, as the scene before them faded into darkness. "At this very moment in the city of New York a rich man is conferring with a group of scientists about the future of this man, though none of them know of his existence. The rich man is agreeing to finance an expedition to study these Kamchatkan savages, among whom the scientific men hope to find some likeness to, and the probable origin of, the American Indians."

Slowly the empty darkness about the travellers paled.

The land was free of the enveloping snows. Summer had come.

In the open bay rode a ship flying the American colours, but the scientific expedition—provided with every possible need for its work—remained

confined to the ship, angrily impatient. It had been refused permission to proceed. Cables and telegrams had travelled back and forth by sea and land protesting and refusing. The Government of Russia declared itself unable to rescind, even at the request of the American Government, its rule of debarring all entrance by foreigners to its penal colony.

The baffled Americans argued and entreated in vain, but the Governor, as his only concession, yielded the information that one of the political prisoners had for years made a study of the tribes, and if the Americans wished to confide the matter to this exile he would permit him to go in search of the knowledge they desired. The disgusted expedition reluctantly contented itself with this possibility.

John Smith and his guide watched the happy exile confiding his little collections to the visitors and receiving in return the money, the supplies, the photographic apparatus, the phonographs for recording music and language, all the costly paraphernalia contributed by the rich New Yorker. They saw him, with face alight with joy and hope, start upon his expedition into the still wilder wilderness, and then this scene too faded and the familiar third turning appeared.

"Oh, but you mustn't leave me now," cried Smith. "I've got to hear what happened to that exile. Please, Beautiful Lady, walk on with me a piece and tell me the end of it all. I don't

believe I could sleep tonight if I didn't hear the rest of the story. Seeing him that way makes you feel you must know how he came out. This is like getting to the end of the most exciting chapter, and having to wait a month to read what happened next."

So they passed on together toward Lonelyville through the damp darkness and oozing chill of the February thaw.

"The exile, who had prepared himself for his work by years of patient study, and effort that seemed to have no hopeful purpose at the time, came back with the richest collections, and gave the highest satisfaction to his helpers," the Lady explained.

"And what became of him?" the listener asked eagerly. "Didn't they do anything for the man?"

"Yes, indeed. The American Government asked the Russian authorities to pardon and reward him, but the Russians would release him only on condition that he would leave Russia never to return. They didn't want such a valuable man in the Empire. So he went to America and became a citizen; married happily, and is now prosperous and respected in his new country."

John Smith drew a long breath of pleasure.

"Bully for him!" he cried. "So he got his chance after all."

"Yes, the chance and the beauty of life wait for all of us, in the wilds of the Arctic, in the little

pottery town, if we are only ready to see and take it, only make ready to use it when it comes."

"I guess Nelly will like this story. She says I'm awfully interesting these days," laughed John Smith as he left his Shining Friend.

VIII

“**W**HAT makes people wicked?” asked Nelly.
The winter was over and gone and the time of the singing birds had come.

The Smiths were walking in their little garden in the twilight with their now familiar Spirit. She was not fond of houses, and for that reason Nelly had seen less of her than had her husband, but as the evenings lengthened and grew warmer, the wife was always at the gate, eager to catch a glimpse of, to exchange a word with, their new companion, who had long since ceased to vanish at the third turning and many times came as far as the gate of the little house in Lonelyville.

**The Origin
of Evil**

Nelly secretly longed to share her husband's wonderful journeys, but so far no chance had offered. She pondered over his reports of them, and a thousand questions had suggested themselves which she was longing to have answered.

Today was Sunday, and coming out into the mild sweet dusk they joyed to find that lucent shape strolling among the tiny beds of early tulips and hyacinths that gave up moist fruit-like perfumes to the coming night.

84 The Case of John Smith

Nelly glanced over to the opposite corner, where the Taylors' new house was building to make sure that Rob and Jim, playing among the piled timbers, were safely in sight, and then she asked the question over which she had been brooding for weeks:

"What makes people wicked?"

The Spirit stood looking away to the faint misty rose of the horizon where the lights of the distant city quivered like heaped diamonds.

Nelly thought her eyes so beautiful and mysterious that her own widened with half tears of tenderness and awe.

"That is one of the oldest questions in the world," the Lady said, at last, softly and gravely.

"Doesn't anybody know?" her questioner ventured timidly after a pause.

"Perhaps not entirely. A thousand earnest and tender souls have strained to agony to find the answer. Have fasted and prayed, have sought it by sea and land, in crowds, in solitude, in suffering and self-sacrifice; abandoning all the joys of life in its search, and unconsciously being guilty of many evils in the quest.

"Here, they said, was a terrible mysterious fact—this great sum of wickedness and wrong and suffering. .

"If they could only find the cause, the origin of it, then it might be possible to discover the cure. Just think what that would mean! . . . The cure for evil. . . . It was easy, joyful, to suffer,

to die, to bear the supremest agony for such a glorious end."

Suddenly Nelly and John Smith found themselves passing across the ages, following that vast eternal army of Searchers for the Truth.

They saw the low-browed, prognathous-jawed, hairy cave-man dully looking up from his narrow round to find the cause of the cruelties and wrongs that made him fierce and fearful. . . .

They saw the first wild priests and medicine-men developing cruel rites of hysteric flagellations, macerations, whirlings, cries, leapings. Themselves fasting, watching, meditating, torturing their flesh in their passionate unselfish yearning to trace a way for their fellows out of the trap of wretchedness in which they were all caught. Straining, groping, agonizing toward some happy solution of the terrible riddle of existence, catching at vague detached hints, bending all their forces to piece together from these glimmerings some knowledge of the mystery, some plan of escape.

They saw them questioning the stones, the trees, the fires, the waters beneath and the heavens above for the answer.

Somewhere were powers fearful, immense, capricious; exacting terrible penalties from human helplessness and ignorance, which without rebellious intent were constantly breaking through those intangible, unspoken rules. Powers that went viewless, voiceless—or speaking only in wordless thunders whose syllables no man could trans-

late—yet were nevertheless watchful, exacting, and malign. Men were like dogs who knew not the meaning of their master's speech and crouched shrieking beneath the lash that punished their ignorant disobedience of rules of which they had never heard. They were slaves who could not guess the wild caprice moving those strange invisible tyrants holding the powers of life and death.

Like dogs they crawled and fawned and wistfully strove to divine those secret wills: like slaves they flattered and lied and attempted to deceive and delude the invisible presences.

Abdul prayed in his thirst for water, bowing seven times in his earnestness, and shortly thereafter stumbled upon an unknown spring. Meditating upon this beneficence he conceived some pleasantness to the gods in the number seven, and confided his discovery to his fellows, who received the information with awe and relief. There was a magic force in the number seven—let it in the future be faithfully observed and used.

Ah Moo, waiting, lean and haggard, for infrequent and uncertain prey, drew idle figures in the snow with his arrow point. Scarce completed, this figure, when a giant elk came floundering in the soft smother and a lucky shot pierced his heart. Here was meat for the tribe for a week. Gorged, glutted, greasy, wallowing replete beside the fire, Ah Moo boastfully repeated the tale of his prowess.

"Much hungry, very faint I was—the cold in

my marrow—I made marks in the snow to keep from thinking of it.

“Whoof! . . . blowing, stumbling—here he came—big like a demon. . . .

“I snatched the arrow up from the markings—no time for foolishness!

“He seemed to have come all of a sudden from nowhere—he might vanish the same way.

“I put the arrow to the string; so cold and weak my hands were I said, ‘Never can I strike him right.’ But, whang!—straight through heart—just a leap and a snort—he was done for. And so fat!—my woman shall dress the skin. She and I will sleep warm. . . .

“Just foolish marks I was making . . . like this. . . .”

The others crowded round to see. Regarded the sign curiously, eyed each other, nodded gravely.

“Came all of a sudden? Out of nowhere? And just as you made these marks? Why made you those marks?”

“I don’t know,” Ah Moo stammered. “Just foolishness. . . .”

They pushed out their lips, sucked in their cheeks. Shook their heads. Magic! Plainly it brought big elk out of nowhere.

It would be well to learn these strange marks by heart: well to carve them in bone, in wood, beat them out of metal: well to wear them painted on their dressed hides, on their pottery, make the

women weave it into the patterns of their basketry, in the webs of their cloth. The Swastika must be a sign of power.

Ah Moo pondered amazedly. Had an inspiration. Smiled a fine superior smile.

"Ah! not so stupid, you others. I never thought you would guess. Yes: that is my big magic—with that I bring the elk."

He enjoyed their wonder and respect. Received graciously the bigger portion set aside for him and his woman. Took on airs of mystery and superiority; believed a little in his magic mark himself.

Next week an elk fell again to his bow—though he had forgotten to inscribe his compelling sign in the snow. He scratched it hastily before the others came running to join him.

"But we did it too," they resentfully explained.

Ah Moo had a swift inspiration.

"You don't know the secret words I use with it," he countered scornfully. "I kept those to myself."

Lying paid well, he reflected, and exacted still bigger portions as his right.

Ah Look brought down the next game, and the next. Commenced to swagger. Declared he needed no magic signs. He was a great huntsman who knew how to find game, not a weakling sitting in the snow making pretended magic to call it to come to him.

Ah Moo fretted and secretly trembled. He

liked those big portions; liked the awe and fear of his fellows.

At the end of a barren day, coming suddenly upon the third-time fortunate Ah Look bending over a new kill, he was seized with fury and panic. His stone-headed axe descended crashingly.

Ugh! How queer he looked lying sprawled like a dead squirrel. . . .

Ah Moo stooped to stare at the skull broken to bits like a smashed pipkin. So that unpleasant grey stuff was what men had inside their heads—just like animals. He wondered what it was for.

He pondered what must be done next. Drew out Ah Look's arrow from the buck's wound; drove in his own; broke a branch from the thicket to scoop out the bloody snow. The body of the man he rolled with his foot over into the hasty grave, flung the discarded arrow upon it, trampled the snow down hard over the dead limp limbs and face.

Help must be got to carry home the kill, but the buck's wounds and struggles would account for the gory pother.

He set out grimly; going with long crunching strides. His were still the bigger portions—the power—the awe of his fellows. Ah Look was done for, out of the way, but he—Ah Moo—was full of life, of strength and cunning. He shook himself, breathed deep with a passionate satisfaction. One lied, and slew, and stole, and *lived*; the others didn't—and died.

The yellow afterglow shone sad and sallow across the greying snow, across the freezing red tramlings about the stiffening buck. . . .

Nelly dropped her hands from her eyes where she had clasped them at that first sickening crash of the bursting skull. . . .

Rob and Jim still whooped and climbed among the timbers of the Taylor house. The lights of the distant city quivered more radiantly in the deepening dusk; a more penetrating perfume rose as the dew gathered upon the hyacinths.

She shivered, and drew a sobbing breath of relief as she caught John's arm and clung to it. The peace of shadowy Lonelyville seemed like a heaven indeed after that tragic savagery.

"But what does it mean?" she cried brokenly. "I don't understand—it's like a horrid dream. . . ."

The Spirit turned her calm eyes upon John Smith.

"Do you understand at all?" she asked. "You have seen more than Nelly."

The man patted the hands that clasped his arm; stammered a little. Vague glimmerings and glimpses rose in his mind for which he could find no speech. His throat was still constricted with the sudden tautening of nerves shocked by a horror.

"You tell us," he said diffidently.

"Do you remember those first creatures wallowing in the slime?" she prompted.

His face lit with a dawn of comprehension. He turned eagerly to his wife:

"You ought to have seen them, Nelly! The greatest guys . . . fat and floppy—and gnarly. Covered with scales, and horrid warts, and spines. Every sort of freak—you wouldn't believe—crawling over each other; fighting, squeezing, crushing. Everyone trying to get the best of the others, or trying to get away. Wriggling, and digging holes, hiding, climbing trees, jumping, flying; all so scared, and all so crazy to live. . . . It was queer—" he ended lamely.

"And the children in the Great Strange House?" the Spirit suggested.

"Yes, I told Nelly about them—that interested her more than any of the other stories. She was ready to cry over them. Poor little tads!—scared blue, they were, and suspecting everybody that tried to help them."

"And all the while such a beautiful house—" she reminded him.

"Oh, yes! A bully place. Big and fine and comfortable, and safe too, if the poor little kids had only known it. I did want awfully to tell them, 'Here, you chaps! It's all right; buck up! Go and see for yourselves.'"

Nelly kept insistent eyes on the Shining Lady.

"Please tell us," she entreated. "I want to understand exactly. It all seems such a pity."

The eyes that met her own were like deep pools of wisdom and tenderness.

"All the wickedness and the suffering came from ignorance and terror. It still arises from terror and ignorance. So slowly, so slowly we learn—we want to live, we want to enjoy. That first life that crawled up on land was so helpless, so ignorant. It clung madly to life—the only thing it knew; it slew others to save itself alive. The world was so hard, so difficult to ignorance. Life was like water, striving to flow, to move onward, to find some ocean. Like water it beat itself against obstacles, burrowed under them, flowed over and around them, eat them away, tumbled them over, and carried them onward. Destroyed, built up, and pulled down again, raged, whirled, gnawed, fell over ledges, shrank, overflowed. Always, always seeking a channel for its living: always seeking in some new place an outlet, an escape from the hard conditions, the stony barriers.

"Like the river of water this stream of living creatures tried to force themselves through impassable ways, and recoiled to try new ways. Leaped up to the light and fell back upon their fellows, crushed over one another, and whirled about, boiling, crowding, foaming. . . .

"You saw Ah Moo trampling over Ah Look as the creatures in the slime had trampled. He wanted to live, to get the biggest portion, the power, the submission of his fellows. His terror lest another should take it from him made him lie and steal and kill. He had brought up that

terror, imbedded in his bones, from the old days of blind ignorance. So many million years of struggle has made it a very part of human flesh. Cruelty, greed, jealousy, selfishness, stupidity, lust, treachery, cunning—all are the fruits of fear. Fear of famine, of helplessness, of death. Even those who rise to higher thoughts and impulses are dragged down and smothered by that great fierce dread that is in their fellows. In a world of tooth and claw, those who are not willing to use fangs and talons are suspected of feebleness or of some menacing cunning. They are sucked in and engulfed by the deep current of distrust, of misunderstanding. Then they too, in despair and alarm, turn and rend those about to devour them.

“You saw how many struggled in anguish to find a footing for themselves above the morass, to find some means of dragging their fellows up with them, and how their efforts were baffled always by that dread and suspicion so ingrained in human minds. You saw how they snatched at signs and magic to aid them in their struggle.”

“Oh, but,” Nelly cried distressfully, “don’t we ever learn? Are we always to go on like that?”

“Yes, we do learn a little. We grow; we put behind us some of the worst things. Every clean and wholesome and tender life helps in the progress. It shows us possibilities; it shames our meanness and timidity. We discovered love a long time ago, and love roots out fear and distrust. First we loved our own children and battled

for them, striving to smother others in order to give these room. Then we loved our children's children, and were willing to step aside a little ourselves to make them a place. Out of that came the love of the family, and a willingness to sacrifice some of our own claims to help its growth. This extended beyond the family to the tribe, to the whole land, to our order and class. We were willing to sacrifice ourselves for our chosen ruler, for our flag, our faith, for something we called honour. The meaning of honour was that we should not use our strength or cunning to acquire an unfair advantage over the weak and the stupid."

"Well, you'd think when they'd found out about love and honour that would have settled the trouble," John Smith said in a puzzled voice, holding his wife's hand in his.

The Spirit shook her head regretfully.

"No. It helped matters, of course, but there were still so many ruthless egotists who approved of the theory of love and honour for others, but who secretly thought both a sign of weakness and stupidity and preyed upon the self-sacrifice of those of the better sort. So many still suspected and hated unselfishness as a reproach to their own methods, and betrayed and destroyed others whose virtues made themselves appear wolfish. The sneer, the flier, the treachery, cunning, and grasping brutality confused and frightened the loving and the high-minded and drove them to bitter-

ness and retaliation. The worldly success of the cold and the unscrupulous dazzled and daunted the thoughtless. Since such survived and batted was it not, after all, wisdom to follow the base example?"

"What a pity it seems!" grieved Nelly.

"Ah! we mustn't be too impatient," the Shining Lady consoled. "Such a long hard way we have come, so many obstacles we have met on the way, but always we are learning a little. Always we have been nursing a fair dream of

" 'Some far off, divine event,
Toward which the whole creation moves.' "

"However we stumble and fail, and wander in the wrong direction, however stupid and foolish and brutal we are, still the lovely vision beckons and leads. We see it glimmering far ahead, faint and misty, vanishing at times—yet always we strain, and climb, and dream. We know there is a path if we could only find it. We try one, full of hope, and discover it leads only to a barren waterless desert. We try another, still hoping, and flounder into a quaking morass where thousands perish. Yet always we try and try. . . .

"Those who see it clearest are almost always crushed and overwhelmed by the strong, purblind, grosser sort, yet though the dreamer goes his dream remains to trouble and disturb those who annihilated him. The dream cannot be killed

though you destroy the dreamer. The great dim soul of the world feels that things are wrong and fumbles after the wisdom that would set it right. . . ."

The soft clear voice was silent. The spring night settled down with misty stars twinkling through a silver haze. The tulips closed their cups, and the hyacinths hung their heads in the darkness.

"She's gone!" John Smith whispered.

Nelly came back again from distant spaces.

"It's time the children had their supper and went to bed," she said rising and calling.

Jim and Rob, who were crouching in fearsome pleasure in a dark robber cave of heaped timbers, came reluctantly to her summons, hoping jam might be offered to console them for the loss of romance.

IX

"YES, true as you live, Miss Corbett, I couldn't make up a thing like that, now could I?"

Nelly was flushed, earnest, and shy.

She was almost sorry, when she glanced quickly at the other woman's amazed, half-doubting face, that she had broken her silence about these strange experiences. The House
Appointed
for All
Living

"But—it seems so incredible! A spirit you say?—and visions? and going on for months. . . . Oh, please don't be angry, dear Mrs. Smith"—as she noted the sudden wave of colour. "Of course I must believe you—but you can see how wonderful and surprising it is to hear of it for the first time. It takes one's breath away. . . ."

Nelly looked mollified.

"Well, I felt sort of that way myself in the beginning," she admitted. "If it hadn't been John that said it, I'd have thought it was just a crazy sort of dream."

Eleanor Corbett told herself that this would be an interesting case for investigation by the Psychological Society. A simple little typewriter inventing this curious delusion, and then com-

municating the same delusion to his wife's mind. She felt she must learn more about it.

"And you still see these visions?" she asked.

"Oh, yes. The Shining Lady tells us things, and then sort of like illustrating what she means, so we'll understand better, I suppose—we suddenly see the strangest pictures. Awful sights sometimes."

"What sort of sights, for example?"

Miss Corbett began to be troubled over these simple folk who saw "awful things sometimes."

"Well, foreign countries. Japan, and the Arctic places. And how the world was made, and all the queer creatures fighting; and savages killing each other; and sometimes not real things—sort of parables about the way people behave so as to make you see how foolish it is to act the way we do. And once we saw different people making religions, trying to find out why things are wrong and how to make them right. One man was so sort of pathetic. I think he was an Indian. It was in a desert. The full moon was shining, and he was standing up on a high place and seemed so alone, and it was just as still as still. He was terribly thin. All his ribs showed. I think he'd been fasting perhaps, and he'd cut himself in a lot of places and the blood had dried in long crusts down his legs. He was stretching his arms up to the sky, and looked as if he was trying to force himself to see and know things. . . . It made you feel so sorry for him. I wanted awfully to

House Appointed for All Living 99

wash him, and feed him, and make him sleep, and tell him after all it didn't matter; if it was going to make him so wretched why we'd just get on as we were."

Nelly paused, out of breath.

Miss Corbett stared with raised eyebrows. The thing was too amazing. These were not the squalid banal visions of the mere nervous degenerate.

"And the—the Spirit?" she questioned a little stumbingly. "What did you say she was like?"

"Oh, lovely! All shining and kind, and so wise. Whenever you're angry with the queer things people do, she makes you just sorry for them instead. It was she that made us understand how much we had, and how beautiful everything is, and how this is heaven right now if we'd only look at the world the right way."

The listener drew a long breath of envy of Nelly's clear uplifted aspect. Her work in the Hospital Guild had brought her in contact with the Smiths and she had been touched by their small gifts of flowers to the sick children, given in memory of their own dead child. She had drawn the sad little mother into the circle of her interest and had developed a strong liking for the simple kindly woman. It pleased her to come for a visit now and then in the prim little parlour with its naïve adornments. Until today she had had no glimmering of the strange spiritual life of this humble couple.

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"I wish I could see your Spirit and your visions," she said gently.

"Perhaps you can, Miss Corbett," Nelly cried eagerly. "Of course," she added with hesitating diffidence, "I don't think she'd show herself to some people. Not to the kind who'd sneer and laugh, and think we're crazy, but you're so different. I know she'd like you. And it would be such a comfort if you saw her too, and all the things she showed, for sometimes John and I say, after all, perhaps we're just in a sort of dream, but if you saw it too then we'd *know* it was really true."

"But how can I find her?" the younger woman asked humbly. "I wouldn't know where to look."

Nelly reflected.

"Perhaps she'll come this evening. She hasn't been here for nearly a week, and"—she hesitated, but finally brought it out with a rush—"if you would be willing to stay and have supper with us—of course it's not what you're used to—she might be here this evening. . . ."

"I'd like it of all things, you dear kind person!" Eleanor replied warmly. "You haven't a telephone? I think they must be warned at home that I shall not be back at the usual hour. . . ."

"Oh, that can be managed all right, Miss Corbett. When the man comes with the evening milk, he'll take a telegram to the office if you'll write it, and John will see that you get home safely. There's the milk cart now."

The telegram written and despatched, the guest

House Appointed for All Living 101

gaily declined to idle during the preparation of supper, borrowed an apron, laid aside her hat, and proved her competence in the tiny spotless kitchen.

"You're real handy, Miss Corbett," Nelly ventured admiringly. "I didn't suppose you knew anything of this sort."

"My dear woman, I have had a course of cooking and housekeeping lessons. I needed it to help run the hospital. I saw what poor, unappetizingly served food the patients got, and a well-run kitchen shortens convalescence, we found. Your kitchen is a perfect model on a small scale of what kitchens should all be."

"Well, a gas stove is handy, and such a saving of dirt. There's John now. If you don't mind putting the potatoes on the table, I'll run tell him you're here. We do love having you," she said shyly, and flashed away with a happy blush.

Jim and Rob ate their supper in awed silence, showing no sign in their grave, excessively clean faces of the emotion-relieving kicks exchanged under the table. Afterwards they politely insisted upon aiding their mother in the work of clearing away and dish-washing while their father, a little awkwardly, took the guest for a walk in the tiny garden. They even went so far as to plant in their mother's bosom some seeds of anxiety as to their perfect health by suggesting that they should go to bed early. She stayed to hear their prayers and tuck them in while Miss Corbett eagerly examined John as to his experiences.

He was rather more fluent than his wife, and out of his simple colloquial phrases the young woman pieced together a general outline of the strange new philosophy the pair had gathered from this—well, this delusion of theirs.

"But how did this Spirit of Understanding happen to come to you especially, Mr. Smith?" she questioned. "Had you done anything to bring it about?"

"No, I hadn't," he acknowledged deprecatingly. "She just came—sort of gradually, like I told you. I asked her once about it, but she only laughed and said something about 'babes and sucklings.' I didn't understand what she meant."

Eleanor Corbett, blushing a little for her own intellectual arrogance compared with the simplicity of his confession, said gently as Nelly joined them:

"I envy you both very much. I wish your Spirit might show herself to me."

"Why, here she is," began Nelly, with hushed gladness, and then seeing the guest's wondering stare she cried pleadingly, "Oh, you *must* see her, Miss Corbett! she's right by the rose-bed, so close to you. Do try to find her. It would be dreadful if you couldn't."

The wistful pity of her voice pierced the girl like a pain. She felt confusedly that there must be something wanting in her which these others had. Some grossness and thickness of mind or nature must be holding her eyes from the radiant

House Appointed for All Living 103

visions and revelations to which simpler souls were open. She put up a wordless prayer of aspiration that she too might be worthy of receiving the Spirit of Understanding, of shaking off her narrowness and self-content.

Aspiring to freedom she told herself she saw—and yet it was not possible!—a glimmer of faint radiance in the evening air.

The others held silent; watching her—she felt—with breathless anxiety and hope, and she herself breathed deeply with intense longing and suspense as she rose, with clasped hands, leaning toward that faint luminosity.

“Oh, do, dear Shining Lady, let her see you!” Nelly pleaded, and Eleanor’s heart beat violently as the light deepened and took form and voice.

“You too are ready for more light upon your own life and the life of the world, since you sincerely wish to find it,” the voice said, and the girl sank back into her seat faintly wondering at the clear beauty of the countenance now plainly defined, at the strength and peace of those mellow tones.

“If I am worthy—” she stammered—“worthy to be taught. . . .”

“All are worthy of teaching who really desire it,” the Spirit answered gently, and Eleanor felt, rather than saw, the smiling gladness of the man and woman beside her. All their doubts were at rest.

"Your secret consciousness has never been satisfied," the Spirit told the girl.

"Oh, never!" Eleanor exclaimed with sudden passion. "One gives it up after a while. Tells one's self it's no use puzzling over these insoluble questions; that all one may do is to live one's life as well as one can, and just leave the mysteries unsolved. But the wonder, the puzzle is always there asking for an answer. . . ."

She felt the warm light touch upon her hand, looked into the lucid, shining eyes, heard the golden voice say, "Come, let us see our great dwelling, the universe in which we live."

Without knowing how, she found herself, still supported by that strong and tender touch, rising up through the deeps of space as a bubble rises through the deeps of ocean.

In those infinite crystalline fields they saw the seeds of worlds flung abroad in luminous dust, as a sower flings out grain in the spring furrows. Saw these seeds unfold in the nourishing bosom of the abyss, take on new forms as planets and suns, grow in orderly ranks of sidereal systems, develop through unreckonable æons, swell with the milk of life, ripen, harden, and disperse again the seminal of new growth.

They moved through the immeasurable vast beside rivers of nebulae swirling through the clear dark, shining impalpable ghosts of vapourized worlds, coiling, sweeping, wreathing into vortices in the endeavour to clutch the elusive particles

House Appointed for All Living 105

once more into shape and form. Saw the particles lace and cling, whirl into luminous nodules, catch and hold tiny fragments of the mighty flood of star-dust sweeping them onward, fight for life, for growth, for supremacy. Often defeated, dispersed, destroyed, but here and there victorious—clasping, seizing, appropriating, and emerging at last in definite power, blossoming once more into individuality.

They saw the wild beginnings. Saw the turmoils, the bursting into flower of leaping flame; the flinging off of glowing satellites, dancing rings, fiery photospheres; saw these new worlds set out on vast ordered paths through the abyss, still flaming, exploding, hooting with incredible noises. Some lost the road and plunged into the uttermost spaces trailing illimitable glowing tails of their own gases as they flew. Others kept the ordered orbit, gathering an atmosphere, crushing the gases to form liquids, solidifying; smoothing the turmoils, quenching their fires, forming a crust, differentiating their huge impulses into a million outsprings of life in uncountable creative forms of energy.

The tremendous passion of force cooled and soothed by these great labours they saw these worlds retouching themselves, developing, beautifying. Saw them softening outlines, involuting simplicities to complexities, informing their own creations with new powers, new purposes, new possibilities. Saw them sweeping aside the early

grotesque monsters, suppressing fangs, scales, warts, serrated spines; substituting silken furs, shining hair, supple skins, delicate light bones, glowing feathers, sheeny carapaces, painted down. The huge coarse forms of vegetation were destroyed to make place for things delicate, lovely, complex. Perfume, grace, colour, savour began to appear. Roaring gigantesqueries yielded place to light feathered creatures who sang, and flew, and balanced.

Then the outer ends of these worlds began to die. The sap of warmth flowed more sluggishly; the hot vapours chilled to snow, the waters congealed, the impulse of life grew sluggish, the worlds hardened, died, and crumbled again to cosmic dust, began once again the long story of world-life and death. . . .

"Oh!" cried Eleanor regretfully, "why should so much pains and labour be lost? To have come so far, laboured so greatly, achieved so much, and then to have it smeared into nothingness like a child's drawing wiped from a slate. . . ."

"That is the mistaken discouragement of a short view," said their guide consolingly as they swam softly through the spangled night. "Nothing is ever lost. Life tries a way, goes far, finds it not quite the perfect way, turns and tries again in a new field, in a different channel. It is as if a child swept down a house of blocks, having a still more beautiful and complicated idea for a house, and wishing to use the same blocks to

House Appointed for All Living 107

create it. That could not be done without destroying, or rather dispersing the material used in the first imperfect attempt."

"But that lovely world—those beautiful creatures"—Eleanor objected—"they are gone, they cannot come again, all their immense efforts are lost."

"Nothing is ever lost," the Spirit repeated. "It is one of our saddest mistakes to think that; it discourages so many. Learn this once and deeply, for all real wisdom and understanding rest upon the perception of that truth. *Memory is immortal. Matter never forgets.* The outer consciousness may not visualize it, but the subconsciousness holds recollection of all the phases through which it has ever passed."

Suddenly, with the swift transmutation of a dream, they found themselves upon the earth once more, standing upon a mountain top before the door of a great observatory.

Their guide stooped and gathered a handful of dust from the open road.

"Here," she said, opening her palm. "Look at this—in this humble powder lies a mighty history of suns and stars. This has passed through a thousand worlds, through a million living bodies, of men and animals, fish, birds, serpents, plants, insects, trees, and every one of those transmutations it remembers. Through each transmutation it has learned something, has added to its powers. Do you not know that iron never forgets its co-

hesion though it be melted and vapourized into finest dust? The crystals never forget their lovely complex patterns; whenever their component parts are brought together again they at once remember. Seal a water jar for a thousand years, yet instantly upon being brought again under the rays of the sun it recalls its old trick of being absorbed into the air. Then blown by the winds against a freezing current, without an instant's delay the water transforms itself into the strange elaborate snow flowers of a thousand years ago and flutters joyously down to adorn the garden of winter."

"And we—?" ventured Nelly timidly.

"We too are water, and minerals, with all their records. Though our outer minds may forget, or recall but obscurely, our inner one is sure in its recollection. It knows what to do with food, how to separate what is needed, to cast aside what is superfluity. It remembers how to lengthen our bones, renew our blood, repair and cleanse and rebuild the waste of its dwelling. And more strange and startling still it remembers how to form a new seed of being so minute as to be invisible, and yet with its chronicle of all its course of living packed in that tiny compass, so that while passing through the state of embryo it repeats all the forms of life through which it has climbed, and successively takes on each of those previous shapes—lancelet, fish, amphibia, reptile, tailed mammal, ape—before it reaches the highest step

House Appointed for All Living 109

of human likeness with which to be born into the world."

She lifted her palm level with her lips and blew the dust lightly away.

"There goes," she cried, "all the story of the universe—a story never forgotten. We shall sink to that, and rise again to what we were, with nothing lost. Unconscious as that dust we lie each night asleep and wake again each morning remembering all our yesterdays. It too will rise again in its morning with all its previous being unforgotten. . . . Come," she continued opening the door, "let us look in here. Not through the telescope—" as she led them past the great instrument—"we have been ourselves in the spaces that powerful tube only vaguely explores. What I wish you to see are the records of the spectroscope."

The Smiths stared vaguely about at the strange scientific instruments whose uses were as remote from their intellectual grasp as the orbit of Sirius, but Eleanor had visited observatories before and had some slight familiarity with their purposes and meanings.

"The owner of this place," their guide explained, "is a friend of mine. I often stand at his side, though he does not see me, silently suggesting to him the meaning of the strange sights he beholds. I cannot tell him all I know," with a kindly smile, "because the scientific mind must work slowly, step by step. His would be disturbed and annoyed

110 The Case of John Smith

by too much light all at once. He wisely wishes not to be carried forward by others, no matter how swiftly he might be borne. Like a child learning to walk he stumbles forward from chair to chair, gleefully acquiring by his own exertions the consciousness of how to use his limbs."

She turned over his papers carefully, explaining the manner in which records of the spectroscope were made; how the sifted light gave up the distant secrets of sun and star.

"Here you see how he has learned that iron, calcium, magnesia, and many of our own elements exist in the sun. He sieves the light of Jupiter, Uranus, Mars, through his slits and prisms and finds they too have the same constituent parts. He is guessing slowly—laboriously proving each step as he makes it—that the whole universe is of one stuff. He pulls down with astounding ingenuity these wildly remote planets and makes them tell him their story, and more and more they yield him their mysteries; more and more he learns that however far apart the worlds may lie the same elements compose them. Worlds in embryo, worlds rounding to full growth, worlds aging, dying, falling again to dust, are, he learns, fed by the same plasm of being which runs through them all, as it does through the unborn child, the developed man, the tottering dotard, and the coffined ashes of the dead. . . ."

The mountain, the strange instruments, the ponderous observatory dissolved like a mist wreath.

House Appointed for All Living 111

They found themselves bending, in a shadowy hall whose roof vanished in darkness above their heads, over a great camera obscura. In its dim depths they discerned the oceans spread. Huge rorquals and cachelots wallowed in the brine seeking the giant squid on which they fed, and which in turn fed upon a thousand forms of sea life. Tremendous eels wriggled like pythons in the salt slime. Swift sleek-headed seals swam round a whole continent as carelessly as a man walks around a square. Walrus and sea-lions dived crashingly from the Arctic floes. The pig-like porpoises, the shining albacore, the argent-scaled tuna sped through the green waters upon their wild business with the speed of bullets. Vast mobs of mackerel, cod, herring, swept through the waves like a rushing wind, crowded, compact, irresistibly surging toward a goal; checked suddenly, opened, wheeled, flung wings and columns right and left, sank and vanished from sight, moved by some sudden obscure purpose.

Delicate crustacea, translucent as water, swarmed like bees. Great brown crabs with long rigid tails pushed and fumbled in the mud of the marsh edge. Sea nettles were flung upon the sands, rolling and drifting in opalescent bubbles as the breeze caught them, frightening the beach fleas that snapped and hopped in panic dismay. Loose transparent jellies drifted to and fro with the tides; waving fringes aimlessly wavered through slow currents.

Moonfishes, round and shining, rolled to the surface, glimmered about their affairs, and sank again to eclipse. Incalculable hosts of phosphorescent animalculæ spread through the flood in waving scarfs of nebulous light; flung themselves along the dark waters in a living Milky Way, sparkled into myriad stars, rolled into globes that wimpled down the tides in vague radiance, or flickered and vanished in an ocean aurora out to the horizon.

Their wondering eyes penetrated to the gardens of the sea where amid branches white, rosy, orange, among strange flowers, half animal, half plant, flitted butterfly fishes—fishes golden, blue as gems, coral-red, emerald-green, purple, spotted, streaked, frilled, fantastic.

Everywhere upon the sea's floor, pervading the whole water world, they looked upon the unreckonable multitude of the diatoms, invisible to the naked eye, but beautiful, complex, convoluted into endless differentiations of form, tinted like pearls, painted like opals, shaped like flowers, crystallized like snowflakes.

Even in the abysses of the Great Deep, under the pressure of five miles of water, life still found a way—creatures vague, inchoate, but multiple, existed in conditions so strange that lifted from under that enormous weight they exploded into loose rags, unable to bear the sudden expansion.

As the gazers hung absorbed above their magic table the oceans ebbed from sight and the lands

House Appointed for All Living 113

swung into their vision—tropics, zones, and circles spread as a map for examination. From the sea's edge to the mountain top, from the marsh to the desert, from the Equator to the Pole the vital energy found outlet. Amphibian plants and creatures bred and fed in continuous saturation. In the arid spaces, astonishing adaptations to drought were developed. Plants grew leathery and, with the dry-area animals, evolved non-evaporating skins and integuments—invented ingenious methods of storing moisture out of the reach of parching winds, of desiccating suns. Some growing things unable to reach to this providence coiled up their roots from the friable dust, folded their mummied fronds, and yielded themselves to the winds; drifting, seemingly dead and sapless, for months till chance whirled them into an undried corner. Instantly the brittle roots uncurled to seize a drink, revived the withered fronds, flowered swiftly and perfected seeds ere the humidity vanished—passed on the frail but tenacious impulse for existence.

In the fecund damp heat of the tropics, life put forth immense propulsions; brought huge heights, bulks, lengths, to perfection. Bred insect life beyond counting, bred parasites, life feeding on life, life passing through life—lavished colour, grace, perfume, meticolations; rioting in wealth of gifts.

On frigid sterile mountain tops the pulse slowed down to the minute economy of almost impercept-

114 The Case of John Smith

ible lichens, sparse mosses, chill infusoria. The fields of Arctic snows fed from their icy bosoms minuscule creatures, invisible, but vast in number.

In their mirror of the world the watchers looked into drops of stagnant water, magnified a thousand times, to see a whirl of vigorous joyous being, fantastic, rich-hued, astounding in ingenuity, passing through the limits of birth, reproduction, and death in the tickings of a watch. Multiple generations treading swift on the heels of the generations.

They looked into the streams of their own blood where innumerable armies of germs sprang into existence in a day, and watched the Homeric struggles of weltering battlefields through their arteries as the phagocytes raged like Achilles across their membranes. They shrank aghast at the shattering intimacy of the sight, and found themselves, panting, confused, overwhelmed, suddenly transferred to the quiet solitude of the Lonelyville garden.

"You know a little now—but really only a little—of this home of ours," the cool poised voice of the Spirit of Understanding began; her calm eyes and gentle benignancy soothing them again to peace and simplicity of spirit. "You have seen the immense power and scope of life—this great insurgent flood of being that permeates every cranny of the earth, spouting great fountains of fecund force, bursting its way irresistibly into the remotest crevice, climbing every height, exploring every

House Appointed for All Living 115

deep, always ebbing and flowing, intermingling, experimenting with every problem, resolving every difficulty. And all knitted together in an inextricable web—interdependent, living upon, within, by, and for each and all. Passing back and forth through all phases of integration and disintegration and learning in each. You see how life pervades all things, how all the threads of the web and woof pass through one another in a close weaving of endlessly intricate pattern. Nothing dies, or decays, but everything changes into new forms. Worlds only pass into other worlds, to begin once again the climb toward perfection. We ourselves pass again and again through every form of life. We push into every cranny, try every possible path, experiment with all opportunities, so that at last the great whole lesson may be learned of the end and purpose of being."

The Smiths were dumb. The experience had left their apprehension so crowded with ideas and images that they were incapable for the moment of further curiosity, but Eleanor Corbett, clasping her temples with nervous hands, feeling her brain overcrowded, had one more demand to make.

"Please tell me," she said weakly,—“it's what we're always asking, you know—where did it all come from? Who made it—this universe?"

The Spirit drew down her brows a little.

"That is one of the first lessons I wish to teach you," she replied gravely. "Upon that lesson you must build all the others if you really wish to

learn. No one made it. It was always there. That question, that fancy of a beginning, has held back the human mind so long. It is a relic of our childish way of thinking. You speak of space, of the universe, meaning thereby illimitability, *All*—yet you childishly continue to retain a sense of bounds, of something outside of illimitability, of something more than all; you try to imagine some time when all was not, when it began, when it had to be made by someone who stood outside of all. Clear your mind of that old fantastic absurdity and realize that the universe never was made, because it was always there, that it really is the *ALL* we imply when we call it the universe. The rest of my teaching depends on that delusion being relinquished. It may startle you at first, because the sweeping aside of hoary errors always startles. When we first heard that the world went around the sun we hooted with derision and horror; now it's a commonplace. After a while, this idea of a beginning of life, of a beginning of the universe, will seem as entirely a delusion as the movement of the sun around the earth."

Softly the light faded and vanished. Eleanor sat up and stared wildly about the little garden. Had she been dreaming? . . .

X

“**A**ND so I have taught them by pictures,”
the Spirit said.

She and Eleanor walked together in the twilight,
the hour always chosen for her visits,—
that hour when the tide of living swung **The Dawn-
Bearers**
smooth and peaceful between the swift
flow of labour and the long ebb of fatigue and
rest; when the mind and soul were freed from the
clamours of existence and not yet longing for the
bath of unconsciousness and recuperation, and so
ready—more at that moment than at any other—
to yield themselves to the greater vision.

They had been speaking of the two toward
whose home they were passing, and the woman had
asked a little wonderingly: “But why, Blessed
Lady, did you choose John Smith and Nelly more
than others for your revelations?”

“Ah, I knew you had that question in your mind.
You still hold unconsciously to the world’s stand-
ard of wealth and power, and yet it is not upon the
mountain tops that the wise husbandman sows
his seed. Rather from the good simple brown
fields does he look for the hundredfold increase
of his culture. A certain hardening, shaping,

118 The Case of John Smith

inflexibility results from the mind having been fed and moulded by the thoughts of others. Learning and assimilating the thoughts of those who have preceded us is what we call education. We familiarize ourselves with those crystallized thoughts at our malleable and retentive period, and always the dead hands hold us more or less strongly. It is very hard for us to shake them off. We look with a certain suspicion upon new thoughts until they too have become authoritative."

The woman and the Spirit lingered awhile upon the bridge crossing the creek. . . . Listening to the swift furtive gurgling of the water flowing through the piers; inhaling the briny freshness of the cool breeze that drew along the hurrying current.

"That is true," said Eleanor Corbett slowly, "though I never realized it before. Is education a danger then?"

"Not the right sort, of course. Not if it means learning the truths that have been discovered in order to be better able to discover more truth. But you have been widely enough educated to recall how new truths have been always received with suspicion and distrust by what are called the educated classes, especially if the discovery is made by someone not trained in the schools. In religions it is always the trained, the initiate, the hierarchy, who battle most fiercely against a new truth. Take as an example the art of healing.

Almost everyone who has made a great new step forward in the art has been obliged to struggle against the hostility of not the humble and the ignorant, but of the educated, highly trained physicians. The man who first tried treating gunshot wounds by cleansing with water and oil rather than by burning them with more gunpowder was very nearly forced out of his profession. The man who first essayed to popularize massage was driven into obscurity. The woman who first obliged us to see how potent was the mind over the body is still anathema. That she herself was ungrammatical, vain, despotic, and superstitious did not really affect the value of her discovery. The obscure western doctor who pointed out how many powers the body had within itself to effect its own regeneration still has to struggle against the organized enmity of his own profession. It was among the obscure and uneducated that all these discoverers recruited their first followers."

The woman and the Spirit passed on again, and the latter continued.

"I found in these two people we are going to see my simple brown field for the sowing of seed. They had no hard crust of prepossessions, no respect for received opinion to break through. Their minds lay open and unpre-empted, ready for new thoughts—and so I have taught them by pictures, showing them in words the true significance of these visions."

John Smith and Nelly received them gladly, and

the four pacing happily among the small flower beds talked of many things. Eleanor questioned ardently of the earlier visions and their meanings. These new implications of order and beauty and sanity whirled nebulously through her inner consciousness as she sought more light, catching eagerly at passing suggestions and inferences, as she had seen the vortices catch at drifting stardust, her two human companions following the questions and the answers with swift and vivid interest. She voiced for them so much they had not found clear words to express, to demand solutions for.

"But why," she enquired earnestly, as the talk flowed on,—“why have we never found the way, the full light? . . . So many myriads of years—so many myriads of minds always, always interrogating. . . . And then that eternal memory you told us of . . . why should it not have helped us somewhere, somehow, to fumble our way to a solution of our puzzles?”

"Think how near we have come to it sometimes," was the answer. "We have missed it only by inches. We saw glimmers; we heard intimations; we felt it near, so near . . . felt that we had grasped it, had caught at last the elusive truth that was to be the solvent of all our riddles and difficulties, and announced the new truth passionately, triumphantly. We trained disciples in our tenets, acquired followers, worked out dogmas, founded churches, wrote down doctrines,

perfected rituals, and rested gladly in what seemed at last a final solution of the great conundrum."

"And then . . . ?" asked Nelly timidly.

"And then the puzzles rose again. The solution did not quite resolve the question. There was still pain and death and evil—all of which we had hoped would gradually disappear. But they still remained with their frightful question of Why?—of How? We could not doubt our dogmas. That was heresy, was wickedness. Angrily we concluded the failure must arise from lack of full acceptance of the light we had found, not from any shadow in or weakness of the light. We scourged and cursed the half-hearted, the doubters; added new dogmas, new rituals, yet despite all our efforts while the centuries lapsed the first enthusiasm grew cold as we saw the old difficulties reappear. We sank into the dull formulæ of gestures, of ritual, of superstitions, of dependence upon reiteration of prayers, genuflections, ceremonies. Seeing this the eager, impatient souls set out on a new search for the light, believed themselves to have discovered it, and the old round began once more."

Eleanor stared into the evening with wide brooding eyes, and John Smith, seeing at last that she was too sunk in thought to break the silence, ventured to put the question that perturbed him:

"Had none of them found the truth—the real light, then?"

"Oh, never think that!" his Shining Lady

exclaimed, turning the kindness of her eyes upon him. "They had all found some part of it. They were all bearers of the dawn. If they had been wise enough to add those broken lights each to each the dawn might long ago have broadened into full day. Unhappily they were distrustful, contemptuous, jealous of all illumination but their own. They denied and decried all other truths than theirs, struggling to suppress and extinguish this alien fuel instead of with it enriching their own fires. The result has been that the arctic night of our existence discerns again and again a glimmer on the horizon, yet never sees the sun arise. When at last we turn full-heartedly toward all truth, then"—she cried in a voice like a silver trumpet—"we shall enter upon our long unfading morning."

The three faces shone with confidence and hope, irradiated by her splendid smile of promise, and holding out to them those magic hands she bade them:

"Come and see!"

The generations filed before their eager eyes, seeking, seeking—turning toward the sun, moon, stars, in passionate quest of the secret. . . . Interrogating the murmuring oceans, the flowing rivers, the mountains and rocks, the winds and storms; they cried to the groves and desert sands, to the birds of the air, the great serpents of the jungles, the beasts of the fields, the reptiles of the marshes, the fishes in the floods; worshipped them, made offerings, held them for gods; feeling

that somewhere existed a mighty power that awed them and that power might perchance have its abode in any one of these forms about them. Always they strove to embody some likeness for their eyes of the visions haunting their hearts.

The three human travellers stared amusedly, amazedly, at the myriad strange forms that vision assumed. Forms of wood, of stone, of skins and feathers, of clay, of bronze, iron, silver, of gem-encrusted gold. . . . Forms shark-jawed, fish-headed, serpent-coiled, elephant-bodied, shaped like bulls, lions, birds . . . having the feet of deer, of goats, of lizards . . . tailed like apes and oxen . . . with hanging ears, myriad arms, multiple-eyed, covered with breasts, triple-faced, double-browed . . . rayed, halved, winged, pendulous-bellied . . . squatting, standing, lying. . . . All borrowing features from one another in that confused groping after the meanings and symbols of the hidden forces.

In Chaldea they saw Oannes, having a man's head upon a fish's body, and tiny arms like fins, who was worshipped as the first organizer of chaos, as the hardener of fluid matter, and the conceiver of form—he who rose from the sea to teach men how to stand upright, and to know the gods.

In Egypt they watched the patient wondering folk hewing mighty crypts for the entombment of the sacred bulls housed in huge sarcophagi of ponderous basalt; saw them preserving with cerecloths, resin, and spices, cats and monkeys,

crocodiles and birds; saw the mighty temples rise for gods with heads of dogs, of cows, of hawks, of apes; saw the people adoring with harps and drums the lights of the day and the night; saw the millions and millions, laborious and untiring as ants, heaping stone on stone to embody their incredible passion of worship, and of submission to the blind forces that perhaps from some one of these seats of life ruled their own brief days.

In Babylon, in Nineveh, they watched vast altared towers arise where the fires blazed before strange shapes of life and death, of desire and procreation; where nameless rites were celebrated, where innocent helplessness was cast a sacrifice to allay the fears of that cringing, yearning multitude who fumblingly sought a means of placating the cruel unseen powers.

In Syria they leaned to look upon the temples of Cybele, the Earth Goddess, brown and fecund, from whose bosom her worshippers rose and were fed, and into which they were again absorbed to be regenerated and once more arise. They saw Ashtaroth, the embodied impulse of desire to create life; saw Moloch claiming life as the food of death. They saw a thousand forms of thought, of impulse, of fear fed with sacrifice.

After the passage of ages, they saw man discerning something larger, more intangible, lying behind these visible forms. . . . Some dimly descried master whom they fed with blood.

The most precious possession they knew was

their own life; therefore if the gods were to be bribed to relenting it was well to offer them life. Not their own, but the lives of their goats and bulls, lambs and doves. Surely the smell of the hot blood upon their altars would be pleasing to these masters, the odour of burning flesh be a sweet savour. If some creature suffered the supremest anguish, the gods might cunningly be diverted from demanding it from man. Even Jehovah of the Jews found satisfaction in these things.

Always, the observers saw, along with such widening of spiritual perception came vague adumbrations of memory; came perceptions, like shadows, of the enormous past . . . of a time of chaos, of formlessness . . . of waters and vapours . . . of the lifting of land . . . of the slow appearance of herbage, of animals, of man.

Even farther back than this there lingered a dim imagining of recollection of things black and vast. . . . Something out of which the world itself had arisen; into which it would again be re-absorbed. A Neith—an Omoroca—bending a hoop-like body spangled with stars around the whole universe. A Chronos who produced children and then devoured them.

"See!" said their guide to her wondering charges as they floated with her through the ocean of Time. "It is as I told you. Matter, intelligence, never forgets. Always man through all the ages has mistily recalled, has embodied in his myths and religions a recollection of whence and how he

126 The Case of John Smith

came, has guessed that as he has come and gone through the universe so he will come and go again."

She swept them into Persia to show them Zoroaster striving, like the Hebrews, to brush away this cloud of confusing and maleficent deities and centre his people's mind upon some idea of a central soul of goodness. . . . Upon Ormuzd, the spirit of fire, heat, life-giving, fertilizing light which struggled forever with darkness, sin, and death, which was Ahriman. Zoroaster taught that purity of body and mind, healthfulness, peace, fruitful toil, kindness to the cattle, over whom God had set a special guardianship, were more pleasing to their luminous deity than the spilt blood of bulls and goats, than dark rites and mysteries.

She passed with them over the fields of Greece that they might witness the sweet offerings of fruits and flowers, of milk and curds, and the smoke of scented gums with which the people sought the grace of Zeus—the overarching sky; of Phœbus the bringer of light, of Poseidon the sea, of Demeter the bread-giver, of Dionysus the pourer of their wine, of Athené the Spirit of wisdom and fortitude, of a thousand gay and gracious shapes which inhabited their fields, their olive trees, their streams and hills. They made songs and thank-offerings before the Spirits of the dance, of music, of drama, of verse, of healing, of the forces of the earth and air of the qualities of the mind and soul. In all this land no temples

were built, no sacrifices made to any God of hell, or death, or darkness.

"How fair was the spirit of their worship!" the Shining Lady said. "How near they came to the great truth! Let us hold fast the memory of this bright courage and gaiety, for we must use it later for our own needs. But come with me now to behold wonderful things."

The whole land of India lay spread before them. They saw the Aryans pouring down from the mountains; proud, warlike, lusty with life. Pushing back before them the dark Dravidians toward the sea and the marshes, seizing the rich plains and worshipping their own god Agni, Spirit of fire and morning and spring, of all the brave, cheerful forces of simple living. Saw them pouring out the fermented *soma* in his honour, invoking his blessings on their crops and herds. . . .

They saw these Aryans, as ages passed, seated rich and tranquil in their fertile lands, forgetting their simpler gods and—touched to new dreams by the imaginings of their defeated foes—beginning to dream and yearn towards strange thoughts of something far above and beyond the invisible leader of their armies, the patron of their fields and byres. . . . Beginning to dream of something enormous, intangible, unconditioned by forms and passions like their own—of Brahma, the All, who listened to no prayers, was remote, moveless, brooding, incomprehensible. They dreamed of emanations from this mighty Some-

thing—Shiva who cast out of one hand all the pulsing, pululating life they saw around them, and caught it back into the other hand worn, exhausted, broken, to make of it life anew and cast it forth once more on its phase of being. In their imaginings they saw him, in their images they pictured him, as flinging this river of existence from palm to palm above his head. The life of the universe a mere whirl of dancing atoms never an instant at rest, changing every instant, every instant dying and coming again to rebirth. The God himself dancing with long beautiful movements in the eternal ebb and flow, the ceaseless flux of all things. And his wife was Kali-deva, Death.

But there was still another force somewhere, another person in the Trinity. Vishnu the preserver of the life Shiva created and destroyed. He caught the passing atom for a moment, gave it love and help and nourishment. Gave it joy; endeavoured to teach it as it passed; whispered to it hope of return to the light as it vanished into darkness.

"Here," said the Spirit of Understanding to her three wondering companions, "you are seeing the most remarkable guess ever made at the Riddle of the Universe. By sheer memory of what he had seen and known in his eternal travels through cosmos the Indian thinker discovered the facts which we are slowly proving today, one after another, by our instruments and calculations, by

our studies of the stars, of the elements, or the processes of life. We know now that Shiva's river of dancing atoms, forever passing from birth to death and back to birth again, whirls through the universe, carrying in its waves planets, suns, stars, worlds, man, beast, the tiniest animalculæ and infusoria, herbs, stones, water, metals, elements, and the invisible gases. Each and all move, change, are transformed by living to death, and by death and disintegration to life again; are forever, through æons of time, being sucked in and breathed out, eternally rising and setting in 'The Days and Nights of Brahma.'"

"Well," said John Smith, "why, if those old chaps found the truth, didn't they clear up all the difficulties?"

"Because they hadn't found the whole of it; because they couldn't quite see what it meant. Their imaginations grew restless and fatigued by that thought of eternal birth and rebirth. They set themselves against it, imagined that some way might be found to stop the great laws for the benefit of the individual. I will show you what they did."

The Spirit led them nearer to see in mountain caves, in remote forests, in groves and gardens and temples men setting their passionate wills to oppose their gods. The old delusion held strong that through pain came power. By refusing what the gods gave they might frighten the givers into dispensing what the rebellious souls desired. They

fasted from food till their bones wore holes in their shrivelled skins. They gazed against the sun till their eyes withered in their sockets. They lay in filth, in nakedness—swarming with vermin. They held their arms aloft till ankylosed into a pair of moveless sticks. Clenched their hands so long that the nails grew through their palms. Sat motionless, wordless, till the birds built nests and reared broods in their wild hair; the sensible cheerful birds who took all the good life would give them and passed without protest back into the huge mixing vat of death. Then the poor sick brains of the sufferers wavered with maniacal visions of the gods trembling on their thrones at the sight of such horrid constancy of purpose, cowering acquiescently before those who flung their common gifts of pleasure back into their teeth.

“Silly old goats!” scoffed John Smith, but his tender-hearted little wife hushed him with pitying murmurs of wonder why the wives of these men didn’t make them come home to be cleaned and comforted and have a proper meal.

“But men do so love to be tiresome and childish and make everybody about them uneasy,” she mourned.

Eleanor smiled. Nelly was the essential embodiment of the mother spirit, constantly yearning to aid and nourish life, to bring all creatures into a circle of warmth and completion.

“What were they really trying to get at?”

Nelly's husband—a little subdued by feminine criticism—went on, determined upon solving the genesis of actions that seemed to him so mysterious.

"They believed," the Spirit explained, "that all the sorrows of life were the expiations of sin done in some other life, and as long as sins were committed rebirth and expiation must continue. Therefore if one abandoned all temptations of the flesh, made one enormous expiation—snatched the rod of chastisement from the hands of deity and wielded it one's self—then rebirth must cease, and the self-tormentor sprang from his great austerities straight into the peace and poise of final reunion with the moveless, unconditioned spirit of Brahma. Others, less passionate of will, implored incessantly the pity of the heavenly powers, or slyly proffered the blood of other creatures as a substitute. If pain must expiate sins then let the pain of lambs and kids be a satisfaction for their own offences. Perhaps the gods would be contented with such forged coin and not exact in another life the debts contracted in this. It was a pathetic, quaint bit of spiritual knavery. At least, you see, the poor ascetics were honest; they paid their own way. . . ."

This vision passed. Another unfolded itself. Under a giant tree sat a man in a yellow robe, a begging bowl beside his knee. His lids were half closed, his hands lay flat upon his thighs. His living countenance had the still radiant calm of

132 The Case of John Smith

faces newly dead. About him clustered an eager audience to listen to his teachings.

Eleanor recognized him at once, with tender reverence. Nelly—touched by that lovely aspect—whispered eager questions.

"Ah! this is one of the world's beautiful souls. A real Dawn Bearer," answered their guide. "This is Prince Siddartha, known as the Buddha, the Enlightened One. The weary disorder and confusion of men's minds, the pain and sorrow of all the earth so moved him to pity that to find for man some solution of the riddle he left his kingdom, his father, his dearly loved wife and child, and wandered a beggar in search of a truth that should help mankind."

"And did he find it?" queried John Smith respectfully. "Looks a wonderful sort of person, somehow," he added to himself.

"A portion of it, at least," was the reply. "He made but one mistake. Had he urged that life should be made beautiful and livable, instead of teaching how to escape from it, he might perhaps have altered all our history—but listen to his teachings."

How long the three listeners stood to hear they could never remember. Their consciousness of time passed from them as they harkened to the great teacher and comforter of so many millions of his fellow men. . . . He who was called "The Best Friend of All the World."

They heard how the cry of the labouring earth

had come to him in his palace amid his joyous young pleasures, prides, and ambitions. How the sound of all those tears and sighs had made his own happier fate a mockery to him, constraining him to shed his good fortune from him that he might be free to seek some means of staunching mankind's grief. He saw that all in vain his fellows gave tithes of corn and oil, poured out the blood of sacrifices, wrought mighty temples, fed the priests, wore charms, and chanted

“The litanies of flattery and fear.”

It all went up like wasted smoke, for none of it helped them to escape sorrow, disease, old age, and death, and the rebirth into life to bear the same griefs anew, to be mocked again by the old desires, to run the same round “from mote and gnat, and worm, reptile, fish, bird and shagged beast, man, demon, deva, god, to clod and mote again.”

They heard how he, who had made that round so often and felt himself akin thereby to all that lived, yearned to find some truth, some knowledge which would lighten man's ignorance—an ignorance whose shadow was fear and cruelty. Reflecting how his fellows had suffered and perished with cold till someone discovered for them the blessing of fire, how they had sought hardly and uncertainly in the chase for their food of flesh till some man showed them to reap and sow corn, how they had

helplessly chattered till someone patiently framed the beginnings of articulate speech and the lettered signs of speech—he had dreamed that he too might find a way for them to overcome their sufferings; sufferings which sprang from want of knowledge.

Now after six years of wandering, fasting, austerities, seeking, and meditation he had a message to give them. Not by their own pain, nor by the pain and death of others; not by beseeching pity from the unseen powers; not by offerings of gold, or incense or the fruits of the earth; not by building of temples or paying priests could man raise himself from his sufferings and sorrow. He himself was his own saviour and his only one. In his own hands lay his salvation, to be wrought out by himself alone. . . .

Life was a great wheel lifting him up into the light and inexorably carrying him down into darkness, and up and down again. No bribes of blood, or gifts, or prayers could stay that great wheel. But man could, if he chose cut himself free from it; could loosen the bonds of the Law. The Law was that all one's deeds were seeds from which rose inevitably their natural growth. If one sowed corn, corn grew, not sesamum. If one sowed good, good resulted, not evil. If one should sow only good there would at last be no evil to expiate and therefore no need for further life; one was freed from the wheel and passed into Nirvana—pure passionless content and poise.

All life, all pain, rose from desire, from love of

self. Lust, thirst, greed of gold and power, envy, anger, hate, bound us to the wheel; peace, purity, selflessness, love, tenderness, pity for all creatures and things, cut the bonds and left us empty of desire. These were the only things real. All the rest were false shadows confusing and maddening man with fear and hate, holding him back from his true bliss. . . .

He taught them the Four Noble Truths. . . .

The first truth, of Sorrow: Prize not life, he said. It is but a long-drawn misery. Only its pains abide; its pleasures fly like birds, like swift evasive dreams.

The second truth, of Sorrow's Cause: All grief springs from desire and passion; from lust and thirst of things. We chase bubbles, cleave to shadows, sin and struggle to attain them. The bubbles burst, the shadows fade, and leave us lonely, empty-hearted, and in tears. Drugged with this poisonous drink of desire we die, and wake again with the same fierce thirst, to be sodden in new deceits.

The third truth is Sorrow's Ceasing: Peace comes only when we conquer self and lust of life; when we learn to love eternal beauty rather than its passing earthly shadow; when we find sufficient pride and glory in being master of ourselves; when sufficient wealth is found in the gold of charity, purity, tenderness to all living things, and stainless living. Attaining to such love, such glory, such wealth, all sorrow ends.

136 The Case of John Smith

The fourth truth is The Way: The Way in which we reach this Sorrow's Ceasing is by The Noble Eightfold Path:

The first level of that path is Right Doctrine,—a clear vision of these truths.

The second level of the path is Right Purpose,—having good-will to all that lives; letting die in us all unkindness, greed, and wrath.

The third is Right Discourse,—governing the lips that all our speech may be tranquil, fair, and courteous.

The fourth is Right Behaviour,—each act atoning for the faults of our past lives, and making a new merit, so that our good deeds may be strung like pearls upon a silver string of purity and love.

Having trod these four stages of The Way we have passed beyond doubts, delusions, strife, and lusts, and are ready to be rid of love of life on earth, of desire for heaven, of self-praise, error, pride, and may press on to the four last paths of Right Purity, Right Thought, Right Loneliness, and the Right Rapture with which we slip like a dewdrop into the shining sea of unindividuality and Nirvana peace. . . .

The mild voice was hushed, the vision of the sweet majestic face faded, and the four passed onward through the night.

"Well, all that sounds pretty good to me," John Smith ventured at last after a long silence. "Did they mind what he said."

"I will show you," the Spirit answered. "This is China: we will look here into a Buddhist temple."

Passing through the gates of lofty far-flung walls, they crossed a tree-shaded courtyard, threaded corridors, wide quadrangles, long cloisters, refectories, lofty chambers, outer temples, and inner temples, arriving at last at the central shrine of this great congeries of buildings.

An army of shaven-headed priests and monks came and went upon multifarious business. A regiment of them sat upon the floor of the largest of the apartments blowing horns, clanging cymbals, banging skull-shaped drums of carved wood, and droning in loud chorus incessant repetitions of the chanted mantras. Worshippers came to pray, to fling money into the offertory boxes, to light tapers, to purchase charms against evil, to buy divination of the future, to earn in some fashion the favour and help of the Buddha to forward their worldly schemes, to save them from sorrow or from sins.

Within the lofty dimness of the central shrine stood a vast gilded image, seventy feet high, crowned, set with gems from head to heel. To it were offered incense, flowers, coin, lit candles. To it endless appeals for help were made. Before it were sung day by day

"The litanies of flattery and fear."

About the walls of the shrine were hung pictures of souls in purgatory, burning in fire, tortured by

138 The Case of John Smith

devils, and looking up agonized to the **Buddha** for help to escape from suffering.

"You see," said the Shining Lady regretfully, "what those noble teachings we heard have degenerated to in twenty-five hundred years. The truth he gave them that each man was his own and only saviour has vanished, and his followers cling to his robe and whine for aid. He who warned his fellows that no God made or marred their fate has been himself transmuted to a god to be wheedled, flattered, prayed into complaisance. Some of the Buddhist sects teach that mere incessant repetition of his name is sufficient for salvation. Others that the recital of a sutra is as efficacious as a life of good deeds."

"But some good remains," suggested Eleanor.

"Of course. All the real Dawn Bearers bring something that is indestructible. If he brought nothing else than the fact that in more than two millenniums not one drop of blood has been shed upon his countless altars, that not once has the sword been drawn to enforce his teachings, his life would have been a blessing to the world. But innumerable multitudes have been comforted and helped by his beautiful thoughts, and though against his will he had been made a god, at least it is a god pure, tender, stainless, infinitely benignant; filling hearts with the blessed balm of reverence and love."

They passed out again through the many courtyards, leaving behind the jewelled idol and the

droning priests, to make their way across a strange great city convoluted with incessant walls, surrounded all about with a mighty rim of masonry upon whose top a regiment of cavalry might manœuvre.

The busy population were tall, yellow, slant-eyed, impassive-featured.

Huge temples and palaces clustered behind more walls,—grey or bright rose,—and thrust up tilted roofs of glistening golden-yellow or emerald-green tiles.

Into one of these walled, yellow-tiled temples they made their way; crossing a courtyard shadowed by gnarled writhen cedars, enormously old—a thousand years old their guide told them. The up-tilted roof was supported on immense wooden pillars, lacquered red; the interior a single noble room, the only furniture three tables holding strange old bronze vessels. The tables were set before a little niche in the wall, where on a small black carved pedestal stood a slender strip of vermilion painted wood, inscribed with a few curious characters in gold.

"This is the temple of Confucius," the Spirit explained in answer to their enquiring look. "Here you see no priests, no jewels, no money offerings or prayers. Here are no chants, no pictures of Paradise or Hells, no ceremonies. This is the simple memorial of one of the greatest of the Teachers, the Dawn Bearers. Millions and millions of human beings for twenty-five hundred

years have studied his teachings, yet so clear, so simple, so vivid were his instructions that none in all that time have dared create a priesthood, found a ritual, institute a worship in his name."

"I think," said Eleanor deprecatingly, "I scarcely know what his teachings were. I am ashamed to realize my ignorance when I remember what multitudes of my fellow beings have found them full of wisdom and truth. It seems to me they must have had some beautiful verity in them to make his followers content to commemorate him with such charming dignity and simplicity."

"Ah! his temple is like his teaching—simple, natural, austere. He concerned himself with no ritual. He had little to say about souls or future destiny. He saw that we had a problem here and now; that the world was full of disorder and confusion, of cruelty, tyranny, misunderstanding. If some solution of this present pressing difficulty might be found we might then undertake, with that solved, to go on to others; but they might wisely be ignored until that first question had found an answer. Asked by one of his disciples for some instruction regarding the Great Beyond, he—having his brush in hand—wrote down six Chinese characters; one of the most compact and pregnant sentences ever recorded. Expressed in diffuser English his reply was:

"Knowing not yet all of life, how am I to talk wisely of death?" And of death he would not

teach. First let them learn how to live life wisely, correctly, nobly. Let them learn that 'All between the Four Seas are brethren'; that one must 'Do not unto others what you would not others should do unto you.' Let man consecrate himself to man. Humanity was the highest and first business of humanity, and harmony of life its ultimate goal. Whatever gods there might be, a sane, lofty, virtuous life was their finest worship. Life could not be lived alone. Every man was bound to all his fellows and to all the coming generations by a great communion of mutual duties. To this great fellowship the peasant was as vital, as useful, as important as an emperor. Each was bound to sacrifice his selfish desires to the good of the whole. Let all be persuaded of this, let all be just, merciful, and self-controlled, and greed, treachery, cruelty, oppression, envy, malice, would die a natural death. When this end had been achieved, when the brotherhood of men was an actuality it would be time enough to consider other matters. Of what use was it to dispute about the gods while neglecting these imminent needs of man; while refusing to do what—if there were gods—must be what the gods first desired and commanded. Not incense, not blood, nor gold, nor gems, not chants and genuflexions made true worship, but justice, peace, order, mercy, truth."

"Well, now, I call that good horse-sense," burst out John Smith in uncontrollable approval.

142 The Case of John Smith

"That's what I think—just do what it's plain ought to be done here and now, and the rest will take care of itself. Seems to me this old Chinese teacher had hold of the right end of the stick. But what I don't understand is, if these Chinks believed in What-you-may-call 'em's teachings and thought such a lot of him, why didn't they pull things straight once for all? They had only to do exactly what he told them to make China about the best place going."

The lovely guide smiled. She enjoyed these simple, downright comments and questions upon the great matters she unfolded.

"In some ways China is 'the best place going.' Nowhere in all the world are the people so patient, so industrious, so self-controlled, and the teachings of Confucius have been the influences developing those admirable traits. The maxims of the Sage have created a great human solidarity here, binding father to son and son to father with indissoluble ties; creating a mutual dependence and responsibility in the family group, in the village, the district, such as exists nowhere else in the world. Cathay is, too, intellectually, almost a pure democracy. The humblest birth and circumstances prevent no man from rising to place and power if he has the will to master the mental acquirements held in general honour."

"Yet there seems to have been a flaw somewhere," Eleanor commented, "which has prevented the philosophy of Confucius from regenerating

his people as he hoped and dreamed. What was that flaw? The plan seemed so wise, so good."

"An inherent one, I fear, in all plans too rigid and inflexible; inherent in the sanest common sense which takes too little account of idealism, of freedom, of individuality. The communism of duty and mutual responsibility which had so many desirable results was carried too far and became in time a dead weight, crushing out initiative. The average man became the standard, imposing his own limitations, repressing investigations, deprecating any variation from the norm, distrusting new movements. That is always the tendency of the average man. He clings to precedent, to what he already knows; fears change and growth. Over and over again the great genius of this race tried to put forth new flowers, but the average, the conventional multitude, 'the man of propriety,' as Confucius loved to call him, sternly pruned back these swelling impulses and insisted upon submission to use and wont. So in time—constantly checked and chilled—the intellectual and spiritual blood of the people grew cold, their limbs paralysed, their faculties numbed. Once again a great teacher had failed to find the true way which mankind should tread."

Again the Spirit of Understanding led her little company through the streets of this strange city, emerging finally, by way of a shadowy tunnel through the enormous boundary wall, into the grey powdery fields. Again their destination was

a temple; walled, containing many courtyards and cloistered passages, as crowded as the temple of Buddha had been with dim, ancient chambers and halls.

Within one of these rooms were seated gilded figures in niches surrounded by vessels of religion, fantastic and ornate in design. Red, sullen-hued lights burned at intervals about the hall. Some of these lit a long narrow table winged at sharp angles, on which were bowls of earth, of water, of rice, seeds, ashes, fruit, and among them were spread strange sceptres, rods, bells, cymbals—uncanny of shape, grotesquely suggestive. Ranks of tall priests stood in two rows to left and right, clad in long mantles of scarlet, violet, flaming orange. At the centre of the table sat the officiating hierarch, and clustered about its angled wings a band of choristers. Instruments and voices blended in an incessant chant of curious intervals; music lawless as the sweep of winds, insistent as the lapping of waters.

The officiating priest intoned in rapid unison with the chants the elaborate ritual of his creed, accompanying it with incredibly supple gestures of his long hands, or flinging abroad with the nimble fingers showers of water, ashes, rice, seeds; lifting the sceptres in swift outlining of symbols; touching to sound the quivering bells, the booming cymbals.

At intervals the ranked priests bowed earthward in simultaneous genuflexions, like gorgeous flowers bowed by a breeze.

The human visitors stared curiously at the weird dim-lit ceremonies; pressed their guide with eager questions.

"It is a Taoist ceremony—a Taoist temple," she explained. "These ceremonies are more than three thousand years old, for though this sect was founded by Lao-tze six hundred years before Christ, these rituals are older than he and are expressive of the primitive Chinese worship of heaven and earth, their great religion of nature which goes back to the very origin of the race, and which has lain unchanged as the foundation stone accepted by both Confucius and Lao-tze upon which to build their cults."

"Who *was* Lao-tze," asked Nelly, as they emerged again from the temple gate. "I do remember the name of Confucius, sort of vaguely in my school-books, but I never heard about this man."

"He came before Confucius," the Spirit told her, "and his teaching apparently was the extremest contrast to that of his successor; but he had a great and valuable truth too. His creed enjoined absolute avoidance of rigidity and convention. Be fluid as water, he urged, and as humble. All the rivers flow into the sea, because the sea lies lower than them all. Strain after no fixed rules of conduct, he said—pride not yourself upon your virtue and good deeds. Repay evil with justice, and unkindness with kindness. Behave as nature behaves. Assimilate yourselves to her, and put

yourselves in complete harmony with heaven and earth. The earth brings forth her fruits gladly, for the mere pleasure of creation, and asks no reward. The heavens shine and send showers upon the good and the evil, and is beneficent for the joy of beneficence—asking nothing, having no pride, no consciousness of virtue and no purpose except to act according to its own nature. Therefore let us endeavour to copy these great examples. Let us be kind and fruitful and charitable, not for reward here or hereafter but simply for the joy of following the law of all nature, which does not think about itself but is constant, benignant, humble, and patient because it has no selfish desires. Those who will follow the Tao—or Way of Nature—will attain to peace and happiness and grow as great and eternal as the heavens and earth, of which he becomes a part, and with which he is at one."

"Oh, how charming—how delightful an idea!" Eleanor cried. "These Chinese are too astonishing. Imagine their having thought out a thing so subtle and fine nearly three thousand years ago. . . . I am afraid, though,—” she continued less enthusiastically,—“from what one knows of China—his teachings, like those of Confucius and Buddha, have grown somewhat distorted from his original intention."

"Yes, of course. Taoism today is more a system of magic than a religion. His teaching, that those who perfectly followed the Way would grow

as eternal as the heavens, has degenerated into a search after longevity, after an elixir of life. The service you saw was an elaborate ritual of exorcism of demons, and of bad luck: of commination of devils.

"Yet Taoism has been an inspiring living force in the history of China. No matter how a truth may be misunderstood, however much overlaid by folly, it always retains some leavening force; and again and again Taoism has lifted China for awhile from the grip of the reactionary and conservative average man and stirred her to new efforts of thought and feeling."

"Dear Lady," ventured Nelly meekly, "I seem to have been away from Jim and Rob for a thousand years, and I would like so much to know if they are quite safe."

"They are quite safe—anxious little mother!—and you will not find them appreciably older when you return, but we have gone far enough tonight. The world has had so many teachers that many nights would not suffice to show you even a half of what you wish to know. We must put the rest aside until another time."

XI

“WHAT an astonishing story it is!” cried Eleanor, when at last they had finished their enormous travels in search of truth.

The Living Dream Many days and nights had been spent in the quest. They had seen many lands, looked on many strange and moving sights. Longest of all had they lingered in the little Greek town of Athens, where so many bold and nimble minds sought solution of the great Riddle.

Here they discovered that in the same years when Buddha, Confucius, and Lao-tze were seeking enlightenment,—searching for some formula by which to live,—the Greeks too were treading the same path, reaching out to the same end.

Anaxagoras of Ionia was declaring to those who would listen that matter consisted not of a few elements, but of atoms infinitely numerous and infinitesimally small moving toward order and development through the influence and operation of an innate *Nous*, or intelligence. He taught that this “shaping Spirit” of life was the cause of all the activity of the universe, and moved not

through blind chance or fate but by its own infinite self-potency. . . .

The wanderers sat in the Athenian Agora beside Socrates and his pupils, to hear him urge, at the same moment as the Chinese Sage, that a greater matter than the composition and origin of the universe were the questions of direct practical human interest. That philosophy should be brought down from heaven to the common life of man; that man should not hang upon the oracles of the gods but consult his own inner dæmon or genius. He taught his companions that before dealing with great ideas they should define the meaning of the vague words they used; should bring out of cloudy generalities clear conceptions of the end they sought, put them into forms they could clearly understand and grasp. Ignorance was, he said, the great sin. His formula was "virtue is knowledge, vice is ignorance. . . ."

They walked beside Plato in the Grove of the Academe and heard him describe to Aristotle his Ideal Republic in which an ideal order and organization was to be established for happy communities. They listened to him reason of the Idea of Good, the cause of all being and knowing as the sun is the cause of life and light. Listened to talk of a completely unified knowledge which should divide things rightly according to their kind. Knowledge is attained only when the intelligence has arrived at the reasons and causes of things, when it sees truth not in an isolated way,

but connected by the chain of cause. Mankind are for the most part prisoners in a subterranean cave, chained with their backs to a fire, looking at their quivering shadows on the rocky wall and mistaking these shadows for realities. The turning around of some of these prisoners to the light, the struggle to emerge from the cavern, the slow training of their intelligences to look at the dazzling brilliance of the real sun of truth . . . this is education, is knowledge; is the "turning round of the eye of the soul." Learning is recollecting. The soul in its previous existence has held these ideas, and knowledge is possible just because the mind does not acquire something that is alien to it, but recovers what is its own. . . .

Later they followed Aristotle while he reasoned of the gradual arising of form out of matter; how all life pushes forward to take shape, to rise in scale, to evolve higher powers and perfection. . . .

They passed from Athens to Alexandria, where around the great library clustered the neo-Platonists, the neo-Pythagoreans, vapourizing all the clear Greek thinking, the close Hellenic reasoning, into intangible confusing fogs of mysticism where the bold grasps at truth relaxed into helpless speculations, confused, useless. Once again man fell back defeated, and suffered dumbly as without hope.

In Syria they followed in the footsteps of a young Jew rebelling yet once more against the crushing yoke of formalism and ritual, and strug-

gling to arouse the world anew to a vision of the great verities. Calling upon men to do justice and mercy, to purify their lives rather than their eating vessels, to beware of uncleanness of mind rather than uncleanness of food; to look upon all men as brothers, to become as little children. . . .

They heard him repeat once more the lessons of Confucius—Do unto others as you would others should do unto you—Honour parents—submit to the rulers; live cleanly; eschew violence; deal honestly. . . .

From his mouth they heard again the precepts of Lao-tze—Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you . . . that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven, for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth his rain on the just and the unjust. . . . Be as the lilies of the field, as the fowls of the air. . . . The letter killeth, the spirit giveth life. . . .

With Buddha he blessed the meek, the poor, the lowly minded, the pure-hearted . . . showing the deceits of riches and power . . . urging the putting aside of the delusions of the world and the flesh, of dependence on formulas and rituals, of crying, "Lord! Lord!" or offering the blood of bulls and goats, instead of doing the will of the heavenly powers. . . .

They watched the multitudes following his footsteps, hanging upon his words, straining after the light, hoping to find at last the final answer to

their problem. After he had passed from among them they watched the enthusiastic coming together of those who had heard him, in order that they might each aid each to tread the path he had shown—travelling ardently by sea and land to spread the happy news of the dawn of the truth which was to rescue all the world from its misery and darkness.

Passionate study, discussion, meditation were given to his words that all their implications might be grasped, that the last drop of meaning might be wrung from them to staunch the old, old thirst to drink deep of enlightenment.

Slowly, from many minds, from many sources rose a conception of what it might imply. No doubt all they had believed, guessed at, strained for before had a meaning but dimly seen until made clear by this new light. From long ago, in a thousand cults, the believer had been baptized to signify the drowning of his old self to rise again as a new being whose past was washed away. Therefore they too must be baptized to the sound of this great new name, for at last the water poured really meant regeneration, redemption, salvation.

Far back in the deepest mists of the past it had been the habit to eat the flesh and drink the blood of sacred creatures in order that their virtue might pass into the worshipper. So Thammuz was worshipped, so they ate and drank, by symbol, of the body and blood of Dionysus, of the corn that was the flesh of Demeter. Here was one of far more

mystic virtue than the Goddess of the Corn, the God of the Vine, or Thammuz the Spirit of sun and summer and fertility. Let his followers therefore eat and drink of the body and blood of the new teacher and so absorb the spirit of light and life. All these preceding eucharists had been but a shadow of this great new feast.

Always man had deprecated the wrath and vengeance of his deities by the shedding of blood, by the death of cattle, of sheep, of goats, and doves. Rivers of blood had been poured upon their altars, millions of anguished death-cries had risen to the terrible, mysterious face of heaven in expiation of sin. But now at last the final sacrifice was made. Here was a lamb with blood so precious that at once, for all, sin was paid for, man's trespasses redeemed.

An amazing, almost unbelievable thing! . . . That awful, implacable power before which all humanity cowered—so relentless in exaction, so vengeful in punishment—had wearied at last of the blood of creatures. He would not forgive. Some one must pay. Some sacrifice of life must redeem offences, but with astounding indulgence he himself produced the victim who must die to satisfy his anger. He produced the victim from his own substance. Sacrificed part of himself to placate himself.

No wonder the hearers of this good news were as prisoners released, as slaves freed from bondage. They were debtors, writhing in the grasp of a

relentless creditor, whose whole debt was lifted at no cost to themselves. Clinging to this hope men abandoned all they had hitherto held dear, suffered death gladly to witness to their passionate wish that it might be true. For if it were not true, were they to be disappointed again, then life would close darkly about them once more, full of doubts, fears, misgivings, and they had better die immediately than drag the weary old chain of confusion and despair.

Because the news was so full of hope therefore it must be true. A wave of joy and relief lifted the Western world to ecstatic acceptance of these doctrines. A rich enthusiasm and emotion pulsed through hearers of the message. At once they set themselves to perfect and develop the new teachings, the new ceremonies and rituals. Need was, they felt, to preserve the least inflection of the precious deliverance, lest some slight mistake might rob them of its complete benefits. It behooved them to search out every suggestion of hidden meaning, to hold fast every gesture used by the disseminators of the truth for fear some shadow of ignorance might dim the glorious day so newly dawned.

More especially was this wise in view of the fact that a new era was imminent. Soon, very soon their redeemer was to come again to sweep away this sorrowful and disappointing world and create a new heaven and new earth after a very different pattern. But only the faithful and believing were

to have part in this glorious regenerated existence. The scoffing and the doubtful could not presume to share this reward with those who suffered and strove and held fast to each jot and tittle of the truth. Therefore, all this revelation must be discussed and ordered with infinite care.

Alas! some were so wilful—words, that were so luminously clear there could be no doubt of their meaning, were shockingly misinterpreted by distorted intelligences. Dissensions as to the exact meanings of symbols, of forms, of ceremonies arose. These madmen must be forced to yield their fantastic delusions lest the golden truth be lost or dimmed and all suffer in consequence. Better to slay them than that their unhappy fellows should thereby be robbed of their glorious destiny. . . .

The watchers saw the old cruel struggle renewed. Saw schisms and heresies drowned in blood. Saw Manichæans, Gnostics, Donatists, Montanists, Albigenses, Arians, Hussites, Lollards slaughtering and slaughtered, hunted like noxious vermin, burned, disembowelled, tortured, annihilated. God might send his rain upon the just and the unjust, but man would not be guilty of such unchristian weakness.

They watched miserably the old superstitious reverence for ritual and formula usurp the new faith. Saw greed of power mock the dream of man's brotherhood, and the old base conception of the deity revive,—a god who was jealous, cruel,

capricious; to be placated by the flattery of pompous ceremonies, to be bought off by gifts from his own purposes. A god to be wheedled and deluded by meticulous genuflexions, and diverted from his vengeance through the intercession of his favourites, who were bribed to intercede by gold, by submissive attitudes. A pitiful, vain, foolish god who cared little for purity or virtue, for charity and clean living, but who was enormously concerned as to the dress of his courtiers, whether they threw their scarves over the right shoulder or the left, raised two fingers or three, rang a bell or not, turned to east or west, bowed once or thrice, kneeled or stood, made a sign of the cross or omitted it; could show a long lineage of the laying on of hands or were unfortunate parvenus, not worthy to be received at court among the snobbish gentry of the faith who sneered at the pushing newcomers as repulsive climbers into sacred places. . . .

Once again the sun had failed to rise and illumine mankind though the dawn had given so splendid a promise of full day. . . .

In this twilight of pettinesses they saw the minds of the multitude wandering dazed and helpless after intellectual will o' the wisps that led them anew into the bottomless mire. Gnostics, Mystics, Manichees, Arians, Mandeans, wove clogging webs of confusion about the minds of men, smothering all clear thinking in intangible threads that choked the soul in inextricable entanglements. Threads

cut suddenly across five centuries later by the sword of Mahomet the camel-driver, bursting a way out of the spider-spinnings with a downright creed of the unity of God, who demanded decent behaviour and vigorous living. Giving in return for obedience a satisfaction after death of all the hungers of the flesh: drink, food, repose, music, and wives "created out of the odour of musk," eternally tender, beautiful, and young. Punishing with sharp, definite hell-fires all vagueness, laziness, and incompetence.

Here was a creed that plain men, with no taste for misty speculation, for mystic exaltation, could understand, could get a stimulus and satisfaction from. The fighters, the doers, the physically ardent, streamed after the new teacher, with whirling swords and ferocious war-cry driving the dreamers before them like sheep. Butchering and shearing till out of the spoils they built for themselves towering empires of luxury—striving to realize on earth the sensual splendours of the promised heaven—in which empires they rotted down again to sloth and self-indulgent dreams.

Neither cloudy theorizing nor strenuous materialism could answer the complete needs of man, so it seemed.

But always the wanderers saw the world turning, seeking, striving for truth. The river of life ate and gnawed at the barriers of ignorance and delusion. Somewhere was the sea, calling, calling, and forever the search persisted for the way lead-

ing to its boundless bath of salt regeneration and completeness.

They plodded alongside the seekers through the dusty deserts of scholasticism. They saw a new hope arise with the Renaissance of Greek and Latin thought. Saw the eager searchers for the Way—stealthily under the fear and shadow of an intolerant hierarchy—reading amazedly the bold assertions of the Roman, Lucretius, that the one great source of man's wickedness and misery is religion . . . that immortality is an empty dream and the source of the worst terrors that haunt men's minds. The universe, he declared, was evolved out of an infinite number of atoms whirling through space like a snow-storm. Any definite act of creation is unthinkable; nothing can come out of nothing, neither can anything be destroyed; destruction is only a name for a change of substance. All knowledge is derived from the senses, which must be our final criterion of truth. Everything of which we are aware can be explained by natural causes, and what are called life, mind, soul, are simply parts of man as his limbs are part of him, and death decomposes their elements as it does man's flesh. . . .

The watchers saw the startled investigators rediscovering the real teachings of Aristotle, Plato, Socrates, Anaxagoras, Democritus; brushing from off their words the dust of Alexandrianism and Scholasticism, which had so obscured and distorted their real significance; breaking through the

fetters of mediæval fanaticism and ignorance. Awakening minds began to doubt that the earth was the centre of cosmos,—that all the hosts of heaven were a special creation for man's benefit. Abelard, Galileo, Bruno, ventured upon investigations for themselves of the material and spiritual world. . . .

Printing was invented. The telescope was made to investigate the outer deeps; the microscope opened the inner deeps. The world quivered with a new impulse of curiosity, with a new boldness to penetrate and explore the Strange Great House in which man dwelt, to touch and handle all the mysteries and terrors, and to tear from them the secret of their menacing powers.

Always hung heavily upon the explorer the older methods of thought. Always he was weighted with the old questions of man's place in the universe, his origin, his final destination, the real nature of the enormous forces he perceived moving about and through him. A thousand times he took all the elements of the tremendous question apart and put them together again in a new way. . . .

Where did we come from? How did we come? Where were we going? What was the destiny awaiting the consciousness we felt within us? Did it survive death, and in what form? Who or what was the great underlying something that manifested itself in us and in all we saw about us? . . .

Each thinker answered it in a different way.

Descartes opined that the imperfect could not conceive of the perfect. Therefore a perfect God must have implanted the idea within us of an omniscient, infinite deity.

The humble, gentle, consumptive Jew, Spinoza, was sure that mind and matter were one. The visible universe was simply a manifestation of the great invisible Infinite One, from which it arose and into which it was merged again, and this Infinite had no personality; it neither thought nor created.

Bacon, like Socrates, wished to sweep away "the phantoms of the human mind," "the idols of the tribe." Wished to lay aside preconceptions and intuitions and find truth by observing; reasoning only from those observations; taking all the first steps on the solid ground offered by the senses, lit by the dry light of reason—reason that mounted step by slow step, upon things seen and proved. To what discoveries of spiritual things we might thus climb he did not pretend to foresee; it was certain that whatever we did find by travelling this road of experiment and deliberate proof we might at least be certain was truth. The other path was swifter, easier, more agreeable, but so far it had led nowhere, and was constantly landing its pilgrims in quagmires and blind alleys.

Locke set himself to find out what the human understanding might hope to know. He repudiated fanatic convictions which were based on intuition. The chief cause of error was endeavour-

ing to grasp at matters beyond our reach, and covering our real ignorance of them by empty phrases, and dogmas that we declared to be "innate" perceptions of facts. Let us adapt our intellectual life to actual conditions, so that though we may fall far short of perfect comprehension of the universe, yet what we can thereby discover may be perhaps sufficient for our state of being.

Kant, Hegel, Fichte, returned to the old alluring charm of metaphysics: striving once again to pluck out the heart of the Eternal Mystery by pure speculation; by an enormous exercise of the finesse of intuition to reach at a bound the end of the labyrinth, the top of the mountain veiled in clouds.

Schopenhauer, the pessimist, restated the hypothesis of Buddhism. Life is the product of desire—"Of the will to live." Crush out desire, subdue that will, and "there is no more." Will is the great creative, pushing, disturbing force that expresses itself in the form of life—completely denied it passes into quiescence, into Nirvana. . . .

They saw, however, that while the mystics and the metaphysicians fought for their cloudland the world of men as a whole dealt with furious energy and will with the visible, tangible existence about them; with things on which they could lay their hands; things they could hear, could see, taste, and smell. What they could not see with the naked eye was wrenched down to, or up into vision by ingeniously wrought glasses and arrangements of

light. What they could not hold with the naked hand was yet harnessed and subdued by astounding ingenuities of machines and engines. Forces mighty and apparently intangible were bridled and bitted and transformed to useful commonplace servants. The earth, delved into, rendered up an amazing history incredibly old and incredibly dramatic, written and recorded with minute fidelity in sands and rocks, in clay and in chalk, in coral and coal. They picked water to pieces, and unravelled fire to see the chemical threads of which each were woven. They cut the air into its constituent slices; burned, froze, melted it. Weighed the earth and the stars. Took light apart, counted its movements, found its secret heart which had been veiled from the eyes; saw it pass through hammered steel as through a gossamer bride's veil. By aid of these secret lights they looked at their own bones, at their own hearts. They saw man reach up into the heavens, pull down Jove's thunderbolts, and use them as horses, as messengers to run errands, to make amusing toys for babies. They saw him squeeze out of coal all the stored energy of the suns that had set a million years ago. Saw him rage across the world more swiftly than the magicians on their wizard carpets, and speak across seas as simply as to men in the same room. Saw him mount into the heavens and fly faster than the wild goose or the eagle, and pack away faces and voices upon paper and rubber that others might in the future look upon counte-

nances long dead, listen to tones from mouths crumbled into dust.

Instead of crushing out the will to live Man willed to live always more richly and fully. He fought his evils and found them conquerable. Sought the invisibly minute enemies in his blood and routed them from the life stream. Fought winter's cold with skilful creations of summer's warmth in his dwelling; fought the heat of summer with manufactured cold. Enriched his sterile soil with fertilizers plucked out of the air. Stored up his rains to be used as he pleased.

He began to pry into his own brain, to study the impulses of his heart; to map out his own thinking and feeling, to chart the tendencies of groups, tribes, races, nationalities.

Yet still the old problems cropped out across his splendid rush along the path of achievement. Still he doubted and puzzled over his final destiny; still wrangled and struggled with his fellows—followed the old way of fear, suspicion, trickery, treachery, cruelty, greed, lust, gluttony, disease, and pain. The day lingered at twilight still. Still life was full of disappointment, sorrow, dissatisfaction. The heart cried that its eternal dream was not fulfilled. Somewhere was happiness, but always, clasping its semblance, it melted into nothingness; joy forever beckoned, forever fled, like the rainbow's end.

XII

IT had not been possible that so great a quest should be kept secret. The three who made those enormous journeys with the Shining Spirit through the outer worlds of space, through the inner worlds of the infinitesimal, through the history of man's reasonings and speculations, could not be altogether silent with those surrounding them as to these so tremendous experiences.

Eleanor had perforce confided in her father the reason of her frequent visits to the little house in Lonelyville, and had found him, somewhat to her surprise, a sympathetic and interested listener. It startled her to discover that this prosperous old lawyer, who wielded professionally his talents and knowledge with what she had felt to be an almost cynical skill and worldliness, had secretly pondered and puzzled over the questions which now so absorbed her time and thoughts, and he in turn studied her from under his bushy eyebrows with a new respect and attention. He had supposed her femininely content with her amusements and her charities, and hardly aware of any unsolved spiritual interrogatories.

Each had believed their intimacy with, and knowledge of the other perfect, and both were moved and astonished to find that warm mutual affection had left them entirely ignorant of the deepest emotions of one another's souls.

Eleanor was touched and tenderly amused by her father's stately humility and reverence in the presence of the Spirit, whom she had persuaded to permit of his joining their studies and expeditions. Proud too of the skill with which he had tactfully swept away the unease of the Smiths at his presence.

Also it had been impossible to shut out Winthrop Corbett, her distant cousin, her father's junior partner, and her own fiancé. That brilliant and accomplished young man, wholly satisfied as yet with himself and with life, and holding tenaciously to certain archaic masculine prejudices as to woman's intellectual sphere, had taken unpleasantly the revelations of his betrothed's mental and spiritual excursions. He had indignantly scorned and contemned the whole episode as unwholesome, unconventional, and demoralizing, and matters might have come to a serious pass between the lovers had not her father interfered.

"You, I suppose, will not accuse me, Winthrop, of being a misty-minded crank, inclined to dabble in unhealthy fantasies?" Mr. Corbett enquired severely, and Winthrop, who had known and admired his shrewd and able old cousin all his

life, was forced, half sullenly, to admit that such a charge was obviously absurd.

"Then don't behave like a narrow-minded, ignorant boy," the older man said sharply. "You have had sufficient education to know that from the very earliest history of our race we have been deeply, and very naturally, concerned with these questions, and that the ablest and subtlest minds in all ages have given their best powers to the endeavour to find a solution of these problems.

. . . As yet, my boy,"—he went on more gently, "you find life so entirely to your taste that you are content with just living it, but even you, young, strong, gifted, and prosperous, know that your youth and strength must pass, your talents fail, disappointments and sorrows come, and finally death close your episode. You have sooner or later to face these things and try to understand what it all means. Every man's actions are conditioned, more perhaps than he is aware, by the problem of his mortality and the ultimate destiny of his existence. Any new light upon that question may alter his whole attitude to life. If light is to be had, let us by all means seek it."

Winthrop held his tongue before his cousin's reproof, but Eleanor knew it was not her father's wisdom which converted him into an interested member of the group, but that the clear presence and lofty beauty of the Beloved Lady had promptly revealed to him the shallow vulgarity of the scoffing resentment with which he had first approached

the matter, feeling that to his own triumphant success and personal content no subject not purely material and immediate was important.

The one secret doubt of her love was cleared away by the honest acknowledgment he made of his mistake, and of his desire to retrieve his error.

The Smiths too had inevitably drawn others into the circle. Nelly's sister, Alice Riggs, a small, lean, tense, red-haired girl, who spent her days in the cashier's cage of a department store, threw herself with passion into this new conception of life, life which had heretofore seemed to her but a bitter treadmill of dull service for meagre bread. The ecstasy of her acceptance of the Lady's message and revelation showed how heavily the bondage of her narrow and hopeless outlook had lain upon her. In this new element of thought her spirit swooped and soared like a bird whose wings had at last found room to spread and be used.

Alexander MacDonald, a shy and silent Scotch engineer, who was—through some unexplained affinity—John Smith's chosen friend and intimate, had finally extracted from the first pupil of the Spirit of Understanding the story of his strange experiences, and thereupon firmly attached himself to the others. Surprising them by his familiarity with the speculations of modern philosophy, and by his complete ignorance of the history of ancient thought, which, like so many of his fellows he had supposed to be worthless and outworn.

These additions to the explorers for truth could hardly find room in the tiny garden at Roosevelt Terrace, and Mr. Corbett unobtrusively succeeded in arranging that they should assemble in his own more spacious grounds. For still the Shining One preferred the free spaces of the open air, and on the quiet Corbett lawn they sat or walked in the warm, still evenings of the late summer, questioning, commenting, learning. . . .

"Now that we have followed all these great experiences of our race, can you explain to us the cause of the failure ever to reach the goal it sought?" Mr. Corbett asked of the Spirit, who softly glimmered out of the darkness to show herself among them.

"Perhaps because they turned their faces in the wrong direction," was the answer. "Do you remember Maeterlinck's children who wandered so far to look for the Bird of Happiness, and at last waked to discover that the cage hanging in their own cottage window held the object they had sought through all the world? We have forever looked away from our world to find happiness; forever dreamed of something far off, in the heavens, beyond death, in some future, in some outer space, as our goal, our real abiding-place. In the earnestness of the search we have turned our eyes from the beauty and satisfactions lying close at hand; we have neglected to live here while dreaming of existence elsewhere."

"That must have come about because of the

briefness of life, I think," Eleanor suggested. "Of course, we knew, in a way,—not fully, but partially at least—that there were many desirable things in the life about us, but they were all so fleeting; we had so soon to leave them, and we yearned for permanence. From the first that shadow has hung over us. We could take no real satisfaction in our belongings because at any moment they might melt from out our grasp, and we knew that certainly in the end all our aims, our pleasures, and possessions should have to be relinquished. So what we have sought was a place, a condition somewhere else in which this evanescence and mutability would finally cease."

"Ah! that was the fundamental mistake which marred all the solutions of the problem we were forever trying to solve. If one begins with a wrong premise, all the inferences drawn from it will also be wrong. We never saw the meaning of death—the shadow that always overhung life—though each day we had given to us a symbol which should have made us understand, if we could only have realized its significance."

"You mean sleep, don't you," the Scotchman asked, and then blushed at the sudden sound of his own voice.

"I mean sleep," was the answer, "we rise in the morning full of vigour and interest; we work and play, enjoy and suffer. Then as the night comes we find our energies flagging, our will relaxed, our interest waning—we long for rest. Finally we

creep to bed and sink into unconsciousness. If the day has been a hard one we feel as if never again could we take up life with full zest, yet during the long hours of darkness and repose nature has cleansed and soothed and regenerated every nerve and muscle. The brain has been cleared, the tissues rebuilt; we wake to existence with fresh vitality and warmth, and resume our labours with an undiminished impulse.

"So too with the years and seasons. Having put forth great efforts to blossom, to bring seeds and fruits to perfection, nature grows weary; sinks into the death of winter, lies fallow and dormant, and after the period of refreshment bursts once more into the glories and toil of spring, leaping with new growth and joy; bourgeoning, creating, delighting. . . .

"And so it is with all life. Having run our round we drop into the lassitude of indifference and sink into the sleep of death. After the renewing repose we rise again to a new day, a new summer. The weariness has been cleansed from mind and heart and life is as fresh and thrilling as the dawn, as dewy and inspiring as the spring."

"Oh! I wish I could just believe that—" cried Alice Riggs with a passionate breath of yearning.

The Shining Lady smilingly shook her head. "You have heard, of course, of the little boy's definition of faith—'Believing something you know isn't true.' Well about this you are not asked to have faith. This is a fact." Then in

answer to the protesting look of Winthrop Corbett, she went on—"I am not a teacher or a prophet who announces creeds and requires you to accept them. I am but the Spirit of Understanding who shows you the truths you already know, and then tries to aid you to grasp the meaning of those truths.

"You know that matter does not die. It changes its form, passes through endless transmutations but always it is quivering, moving, striving, living. The body of the man whom we say is dead, the tree which has fallen, the rose that has withered, is passing through swift and tremendous changes preparing for new forms of life. If we burn them to a mere handful of ashes we only hasten the rebirth. Even worlds that crumble are but pulled to pieces to form new worlds. Nothing is lost or wasted in the universe. As long as this world lasts it loses nothing. Once anything belonging to this earth is here it remains here until the earth is scattered again in space. Also we know that what we call spirit, soul, consciousness, ego, is a quality of matter as cohesion is a quality of iron. It inheres in matter, is an essential part of it as heat is an essential element of fire. All matter has this soul, this ego. Take water as an example. You may freeze it so that it becomes as solid as a rock, yet it is still water. Vapourize it to steam, it is no less water. Turn it to clouds, mist, dew, frost—through all those changes it has the soul, the ego, of water. Even untwist the two chemical strands of which it is woven, yet wherever two

parts of hydrogen are mixed with one of oxygen water is instantly reborn. That soul, which is water, survives all disintegration and rushes into existence again somewhere else. The drop of dew that has dried in the sun has become invisible to our eyes, but it is not lost; it will be a drop of dew again and again. The body of the tree broken and burned upon our hearth seems to be destroyed, to leave nothing but ashes, but the elements pulled apart in combustion will re-unite in the forests and wave its branches in the winds of other years."

"You believe then in the old Eastern theory of the transmigration of souls," Winthrop Corbett asked rather hostilely. He instinctively resented any question of the received opinions of his class and time.

"That was an intuition which recurred to man again and again," she answered with a mild glance. "Not only in the East but all over the world. We have been so bounded by a momentary personality that the tendency has been to think of William Brown's soul as always just the William Brown who is our next door neighbour, but how little we really know of William Brown's soul—how little he knows of it himself. There are so many powers and possibilities in him, which circumstances have made or marred, that he could never be the same personality except in exactly the same circumstances and surroundings. So if one thinks of the transmigration of a soul as the coming again in other circumstances of our next door neighbour

then there is no such thing. Yet the coming back again of what is really William Brown is as certain as tomorrow's rising of the sun."

"Oh! but—" exclaimed Eleanor wistfully, "it is that very thing we have all yearned for. It is what we hope for in immortality;—that somewhere, somehow we shall be just ourselves; not vague chemical mixtures, but *me*—the Mary Robertson or Henry Williams I know. It seems a real death if we are to be so different in a new life."

"Do you remember when we looked into the camera obscura and saw the human embryo repeating in its mother's body so many forms through which it passed in its previous lives before it evolved into man? You remember it was very like at first to the protozoa, the lowest form of life. Then it was like the lancelet, one of the earliest types of fish. Next it developed gills; it took on reptilian characteristics, and at last became a mammal, and at one stage had a tail and could not have been distinguished from the embryo of an ape. Now in all these forms through which man developed he must have loved himself in each one. In each he must have considered himself the highest form of existence, and—if he could consider immortality—have desired to continue in just that form. He could not conceive of man with his greater gifts and powers, and even if he could he would no doubt have said—'Yes, he may be a very fine creature, but I want to be just myself

—the fish, the reptile, or the ape' according to the step of the stair upon which he then stood."

Eleanor laughed a little.

"I see what you mean. My passionate clinging to the thing I know is just the reptile wanting his reptileness to be immortalized. . . . Yet it is a little sad to think of. . . . It's a sort of death after all to cease being an ape and have to begin being a man."

"You were not sad when you began being Eleanor. It seemed delightful. You had forgot the ape and the fish. The sleep had refreshed you, and you woke joyously to the dawn and the spring. After each sleep of death you will wake as happily again to new life under new conditions. In your sub-consciousness all will be remembered, as the embryo remembered the millions of years through which it had climbed, and reproduced all its phases, but when it came to human birth it was just a merry child rejoicing in its wonderful new avatar. When you were a child you could not really conceive of yourself as the Eleanor of today. Today that little girl is a thing utterly gone and dead. Almost you forget how she felt and thought. She is a mere wraith. Forty years from now this blooming ardent girl will be equally vague and intangible to you. The real Eleanor then will be the serious, elderly woman with wholly different desires and hopes. When you speak of personal immortality for Eleanor, which Eleanor do you mean—the child, the girl, or the woman?"

"Then you don't think the part of us that is consciousness goes anywhere else?" asked the Scotchman gravely.

"That has been the great weight upon humanity's heart. This world, it fancied, was but a passing phase. Any day, any hour, the soul might be hurled into some unknown abyss. We walked on a knife edge beside a misty chasm. One false step, a rolling stone, an instant's carelessness and down we plunged into the dark annihilation. All around us we saw those but just setting out on their journey suddenly engulfed. We saw those who went gaily, confidently, hurtled off the narrow footway with the half-uttered laugh frozen on their lips. We saw others slip and hang with agonized hands clutching, clutching, while their own weight slowly but inevitably dragged them down. No voice came back, none ever climbed up again out of the shadows. No cries of ours, no frenzied call upon their names brought the faintest echo of reply. The black silence into which they had vanished never answered, never yielded them back to our most poignant longing.

"Most terrifying of all was that we knew, however circumspectly we ourselves went, in the end the fall was sure, and we too must pitch headlong at last into the grim and yawning gulf. No wonder we sought fiercely, madly, for some hope, some faith to ease that secret terror dogging every footstep of the way. No wonder we worshipped, prayed, wept, sacrificed to any- and everything

in the hope some hand might be stretched out to grasp us as we rolled desperately down to destruction. The worst asceticisms, fasts, flagellations, pilgrimages, the abandonment of all the possible pleasures of this world seemed but a small price to pay for aid in the supreme moment of our need.

"Ah! the tragedy of that long unnecessary nightmare!" the tender voice went on. "And all the while we were safe at home in our own sweet comfortable house of the world. We could fall nowhere. Could we but have known it that horrid vision was a mere delusion and glamour. Be the day long or short, when our night came we simply lay down in our own comfortable bed to sleep awhile. In the morning we woke refreshed to resume our duties and pleasures."

The little group of her hearers held tensely silent for a while, gazing at their Bright Friend with astonished eyes.

Nelly broke the hushed pause at last. The tears stood on her cheeks, and with timid fingers she clasped a fold of the shimmering garments.

"Beloved Lady," she whispered brokenly, "is this really true?"

"Yes, my dear," the Spirit breathed to her. "It is the truest truth. It is to find this truth that we have journeyed together through time and space. The Earth itself will grow tired after a while—perhaps in a hundred million years from now—and it too will long for rest, and must be taken apart to be regenerated and renewed. It

will have to pass through other worlds and suns to find invigoration, for it will be very old, and very, very weary, but, until that day comes, here we shall stay and live out our long, long time. And when that hour arrives we will have grown so far beyond what we are now—as far no doubt as we have grown beyond that first little lancelet fish with its faint suggestion of a vertebra—that we shall need a new environment and be glad to pass away with our earth to seek splendid fresh adventures of still more growth and development.”

“Ah!” said Mr. Corbett with a whimsical sigh. “You and these others here are young. You can think gladly of endless adventures, but when one is old one rather yearns to stop altogether and rest.”

“So one always feels at the end of the day,” the Spirit agreed. “Tomorrow’s exertions, even tomorrow’s pleasures appear a burden in prospect. One says, ‘a night is not enough. It would be pleasant to sleep for ever,’ but it all seems so different in the morning. When Nature has laid us back to sleep in her tender healing breast she makes for us a miracle. She takes all those weary nerves, muscles, and tissues apart. She lifts away fold by fold the languid brain, the tired sad heart, the unsatisfied soul. She passes them through a chemical bath of the earth. She transforms them into green growing things, cool, silent, wholesome. She washes them with crystal rains, laves them with flowing air. Through all the simple humble lives of placid normal things they pass, sucking up

new potencies, sweet balms of peace. When at last they return again to man, all the fatigues, the bafflings are forgotten. He has slept his strange magic sleep of death and of life, and springs once more full-heartedly to greet the light."

John Smith had been silent and unquestioning all the evening, following what was said with ardent acquiescence. He was the stuff of which disciples are made, but now an underlying thought, which was always floating just below the daily surface of his mind, strove for expression.

His friend turned to him feeling it was there. He was her favourite among her followers—her first treasure trove. She liked the simple forthrightness of his mind, his unselfconscious directness of thought and speech.

"I—I was thinking—" he stammered. "In all this waking and sleeping—don't you ever see the ones you loved again? You wouldn't want them different—not a *child*, at least . . . would you?"

She touched his hand gently with those fingers that warmed like a sun ray. She understood.

"Indeed we do see them. They are never far away. We find their sweet faces in the June roses. Blue eyes look up to us from the new hyacinths. The unfolding ferns are just those endearing soft curls that clustered round a white neck. They chatter to us in the birds and the brooks. The patter of their footsteps sounds in the rain. This is not a mere poetic image. It is an actual scientific

fact. They are really there; running, playing, growing about us; waiting to come back some day in human guise. Passing through beautiful and intricate forms that they may bring new evolutions of perfume and loveliness on their return. It's only as if they were playing in the next room, where you couldn't see them, but knew they were safe and happy by the sound of their talk and laughter. You have been a father many, many times before, and will be many times again, and always the same souls were in your children because always they were a part of your own soul."

He turned his head aside quickly as she ceased to speak, to hide the trembling of his lip, the happy sudden moisture in his eyes. . . .

"I don't think I like the idea of passing through beasts and birds," said Winthrop Corbett rather crossly.

The Spirit turned an amused look toward his sulky face.

"Don't you remember the story of the man who dreamed very vividly that he was a butterfly, and when he woke said thoughtfully, 'Am I a man who dreamed he was a butterfly, or am I butterfly who is dreaming he is a man?' If you, perchance, are a dreaming insect you may wake and resent the idea of passing through a man."

They laughed a little at this, and then Eleanor somewhat hastily began to speak to distract attention from Winthrop's vexation.

"It is strange at first—startling—to think of

180 The Case of John Smith

this being our real home; to suddenly abandon the idea of those outer spaces somewhere to which we were hurrying. All the religions and most of the philosophers stressed the thought of impermanency, of brevity, of the illusion of all we knew. They begged us not to fix our affections upon this world; implored us to spend our brief time wholly in preparation for the other place. The hymns reminded us of it . . .

‘I’m a pilgrim, and I’m a stranger;
I can tarry but a night’—

Even old Omar warned us, that

‘Tis but a Tent where takes his one day’s rest
A Sultan to the realm of Death address;
The Sultan rises, and the dark Ferrash
Strikes, and prepares it for another Guest.’

Perhaps most of the sorrow and recklessness of humanity has arisen from that sense of uncertainty, of impermanency. If one thinks of this as really home it should, so it seems to me, alter our whole attitude of mind.”

“It seems to have altered mine already,” her father said meditatively. “As one grows old one finds invading the spirit a sense of indifference and carelessness which is rather hard to fight off. Unconsciously one says ‘the time is so short now it’s not worth while to make

an effort.' Perhaps it is not put into words, but the sensation is there, paralysing the energies, cooling enthusiasm. Just now when you spoke I was surprised to find myself thinking: 'After all, I had better try to get that new law through the legislature next year simplifying legal procedure.' I had lost interest in it of late; had been telling myself that it was as well to leave the younger generation to work out their own problems; the abuses and errors of the old system would not bother me much longer. I feel now as if before I lie down for my night's sleep it would be well to have affairs in a safe condition for tomorrow. One gets a tremendous new sense of responsibility if this is really home, not a mere inn where one alights only for a day and never sees it again."

"Oh, you've just expressed it, Father!" Eleanor cried. "It's the demoralizing 'hotel-feeling' we have had. I remember Susan Haversham, who married into the Navy and was always having to pass her time in port hotels, speaking of that the last time she visited us. She said she so envied the orderly routine of home life. That she had to fight furiously the temptations of a piece-meal existence. It always seemed not worth while to begin anything seriously; to work or study; to undertake matters requiring concentration or continuity, since she might have to go again at short notice leaving all the broken threads flying. She found she'd lost the capacity to make an atmosphere about herself, to develop any definite

personality. She even caught herself growing into carelessness and sloppiness about her surroundings, leaving rooms untidy, neglecting to create beauty about her, thinking anything would do for a passing episode. . . ."

Alice Riggs, who had been following all that was said with keen attention, ventured her own experience.

"It's worse in boarding-houses," she announced sententiously. "Two friends of mine and me we hated it, so we clubbed together and took a little flat. My! you wouldn't know us now. A speck of dust, or things slopped about just sets us crazy. We gave up the picture palaces for months and months so's we could have window boxes this summer. . . ."

She stopped suddenly, overcome with shyness at the admiring sympathetic look MacDonald turned upon her.

"Yes," the Shining Lady commented, "we have been demoralized by this whole attitude of deprecating our environment. Over and over again we have been told that life was a curse, the world an illusion, earth a bleak prison. Told that the dwelling where we found ourselves was a place of painful detention in which we merely prepared for something different and far better. Of late we have grown to know how profoundly suggestion acts upon the mind. The mind of the race has been deeply influenced by this constant suggestion. Is it imaginable that any one would love

their prison, strive to adorn and improve a house of detention and penance?. . . Consequently we have ignored the dear joys and beauties of our delightful home. We have been restless and careless in what we took to be a mere hostel where we paused for a moment in the journey to the real abiding place; have glared at, or ignored the strangers we found there. Once we are able to throw off this obsession and illusion and say to ourselves that we have dwelt here for millions and millions of years, and shall continue to inhabit this place for more millions of years—that though we shall sleep every night, every morning we shall rise in the same place to strive and grow to something better and finer than we have ever yet been—then we shall know a new peace and poise. We shall really love our home. We shall make friends with our companions, who are not strangers to be distrusted and avoided, but our own sisters and brothers, truly in every sense bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. In all of them is a part of us, in us is a part of all of them. The long days of our sleeping and waking together have woven us all into a close web. At some time we have each loved the other in the dearest ties. We have been lovers, we have been sisters and brothers, man and wife, parent and child at some time to each and all. . . .

“Oh, the long, long way we have travelled! . . . Little frightened lost children crying in the dark. Groping, confused, despairing—trembling at im-

aginary terrors. Striking at one another in our anguish, crouching before fearful shadows and full of wild yearnings for a home we could never find. . . .

"Now!" she cried, opening her arms to them—"Now, dear children, the journey is at an end. We have only to open our eyes and find we are at home in a fair and stately palace. We can rest and be content on this warm loving breast of our Mother Earth, where we shall sleep, and wake, and sleep again guarded by her tender arms; knowing we shall not stray beyond her brooding kindness."

Even as they looked raptly at her glorious face the light wavered, softened, paled into nothingness, and after a few words the others parted, to consider alone and quietly the message they had received.

Only Eleanor and Winthrop were left in the garden. "I must go too," he said tenderly, taking her into his arms. "Good-night, my only love."

"Good-night," she whispered, clinging to him. "How many times in all the million years we have said that, Winthrop! How many times we shall say it again. . . ."

"Yes," he breathed with his cheek against hers, "but, dear one, we have always waked again to find one another, and we always shall "

XIII

IT was a very calm and cheerful group which sat talking on the Corbett lawn a few nights later. A golden harvest moon swung above the misty trees and the warm earth smelled of drying grass and fading leaves releasing the perfumes stored through the summer.

**His House
in Order**

John Smith watched the shining disk silently, with his head thrown back against the rim of his chair. He was thinking of the moonrise across the marshes just such a night as this a year ago, when he had first received the great intimations which had so changed his world.

What wonders he had seen since then! Looking back upon his life before that day he seemed to himself to have been at that time hardly more developed, spiritually, morally, or mentally than that small vague fish out of which the race had grown. His heart swelled with passionate thankfulness to his Sweet Lady who had found him a squalid, blind, stunted little prisoner shut in an iron box and had transformed him to a happy conqueror of fear and ignorance, seated upon the throne of life. He realized how gently she had led him forward. How easy and simple her first

lessons had been. Just the A. B. C. and pictures and little stories like a child's primer. She had slowly let the light in upon his feeble vision till his eyes had adjusted themselves to the clear shining of the truth,—and as the radiance of her coming deepened into the light of her lovely outlines he rose reverently and stood with bowed head in the presence of the Spirit of Understanding.

It was Mr. Corbett who spoke first.

"We have all been deeply pondering the great suggestion you have given us," he said gravely, "and I think we feel its enormous significance. . . . I speak for myself, but from talk among ourselves this evening before you were good enough to come to us, I gather that my own state of mind is shared by the others. The implications of what you tell us are so tremendous that at first one has no room to consider anything else, but of course a number of questions soon suggest themselves, and I am going to beg you to allow me to put some of my difficulties before you."

"Yes, dear Counsellor," added Eleanor. "You have still much work to do for us. One holds this great idea in one's hands and says, 'by the light of this I must try and see all the ancient problems anew. . . . And how am I now to explain the old conceptions of God and man, of pleasure and pain, of good and evil?' One feels it is necessary to see how all this bears upon questions of the conduct of life."

"When you move into a new home, you know,"

Nelly suggested, "you have to think how it must be furnished, and what sort of life you're going to make for yourself there."

"Personally," Alexander MacDonald said, "I want to go even further back. Accepting this new explanation of life, what is one to do with the old question of the Ultimate, the Unknowable, the First Cause? By what name are we to call that force moving the Universe, of which we seem to be a manifestation, along with all that we see and know?"

"I think I must take up Mr. MacDonald's question first," the Spirit began, "as upon the answer to it all the others rest. I shall have to quote to you in the course of that answer from some of the modern thinkers with whose ideas you are already so familiar, but we must try to keep to simple daily terms of speech. The passion for technical phraseology which seems to beset all who seek to explain to themselves and others the meaning of the Universe is apparently a temptation impossible to resist. The average man stumbles over these rugged terms, loses his footing, and turns back disgusted and disappointed. He has only the dimmest idea of what Kant meant by 'categories' or Spinoza by 'modes.' The terms 'subjective,' 'objective,' 'materialism,' 'idealism,' 'consciousness,' 'the Ego,' 'the Absolute,' he soon finds convey such varying shades of meaning to their various users that comparing one with the other leaves him simply dizzy and bored. On the

other hand the shallow, pretentious minds, incapable of any clear thinking, are captivated by this pompous terminology and credit it with far more weight and meaning than it really contains. There is a certain level of intelligence which can see no depth or importance in ideas if they be simply and clearly expressed. Yet it is just the average man who most needs the truths discovered by the great thinkers, and it is just he who most flees philosophy because it will insist upon trying to express itself in terms which he can neither understand nor define."

The Scotchman smiled dryly.

"You are right about that, surely. I've done a good bit of wading and floundering to fish up the few notions I've got out of the books. There were ideas there, but they were like bits of gold in a hard quartz of language and had to be pounded to powder before you could sift out the small amount of paying ore."

"Suppose we begin with the so-called First Cause," the Lady went on. "That is one of those curious survivals of childish thinking that the human mind finds it so difficult to shake off. What we are solemnly told is that we cannot form an idea of anything which has not a cause. That seeing an effect a cause of that effect is at once implied. 'Now here is the universe,' they say; 'we see and are aware of it. What is the cause, the origin of it?— In other words, who made it?'. . . It never seems to occur to those who argue in this

way that their own argument confutes them. They call the cause God, or the Absolute, or the Unknowable, and are satisfied. It does not seem to occur to them that if we are unable to think of anything that had not a cause then we cannot think of the Absolute, or Creator without thinking of some creator or cause of that Absolute, and we must at once try to seek for a cause of that Absolute, and then a cause of that cause, and so on forever till we come round to the point we started from—like a kitten chasing the tail that forever just escapes it."

"Then there isn't any First Cause?" MacDonald said wonderingly.

"Why should there be? If one has not had the mind moulded by the arbitrary rules of logic, which are purely arbitrary, then it is inconceivable that any one should look upon the universe from such a standpoint. It is just as simple and far more natural to think of the universe as itself eternal.

"As far as we know, or have known, or are ever likely to know, the visible universe is all there is, or ever was, or ever will be. It itself is the Absolute, the Ultimate. Once you think of it this way the whole matter simplifies itself. Sweep away terms and phraseology and consider it directly. It did not need to be created because it always was. . . .

"The force of the universe that we feel moving through everything is its life. To the ephemera the life of a man must seem of a length unreckonable. To the trees man looks but an ephemera.

To the rocks the tree's life seems but a swift fleeting. To the sea the rocks appear young. To the sun the earth would be but a short-lived atom. To the eternal universe the sun is but a spark glittering in the dark for a moment before it vanishes. That unending life of the universe manifests itself in eternal motion and energy. All that we know rises out of it, assumes a thousand shapes, and sinks back into it, as water rises out of the sea, passes through many manifestations, and returns at last to the sea to at once begin again its journeys.

"You will see, looking back over man's thoughts and speculation, that he has always, or nearly always, realized this, but the sense of individuality, of personality, was constantly confusing his thinking. It was so hard for him to think of any great matter without imagining it as something like himself. You remember how his gods were simply himself on a larger scale—himself with larger powers. If the creator of a god was a pure and lofty-minded man his god was virtuous and gentle; if the man was gross-minded and cruel he created god in his own image. If he was petty and foolish his god was equally small-minded; troubled about clothes and gestures, about unimportant details of food and fasts, and delighting in repetitions of rigmaroles—a god who could be wheedled, bamboozled; tricked by substitutions and imitations.

"So it was very difficult for him to think of the

Cosmos as a great living thing. He was constantly trying to find some *person* behind it, some creature like himself. He found it hard to understand that in all he saw the thing and its life were one. When a fellow man died he said his spirit had fled, and thought of the inert body as mere matter, something lifeless, lost, worthless without the departed spirit. He could not then see that the life remained intact in every atom of that matter; that it was merely in process of changing its form. . . . Just as the moving, ponderable waves of the sea could change into invisible, impalpable mists, into clouds, into snow, and still be water. The waves were not dead. They had simply changed form. . . . Now, slowly, we are coming to see this truth; to realize that there is no such thing as death; that there is only life, constantly changing its aspect. That moment of personality which we have called life is as when the cold pinches up a fragment of water into the shape of a snow crystal, and gives it a definite visible outline. When the crystal melts it has not died, or lost anything but its momentary shape. Its "spirit" has not passed out of it; it has only returned to its original form, and over and over again it will resume the shape of a snow crystal.

"So you see," she went on, with an indulgently amused glance at John Smith who drowsed a little in his chair wholly indifferent to Cosmos and the Absolute—"you see that once you put aside the idea of death you cease to separate what we have

called spirit and matter. What we have called Spirit is simply the eternal life of the universe, and matter is only the various forms that life assumes to our eyes. Matter was supposed to be something dead and inert until infused with spirit, but as there is no dead or inert matter it follows that the two things are one and the same. You, Mr. MacDonald, will remember that Goethe says 'matter cannot exist or be operative without spirit, nor spirit without matter.' Spinoza's speculations reached that same conclusion, and Haeckel says, 'Matter, or infinitely extended substance, and spirit, or sensitive and thinking substance, are the two fundamental attributes of the all-embracing essence of the world, the universal substance.'

"It seems to be plain, then, that there was no need of a spirit or first cause to create matter. That the two always existed at the same time, and there was no act of creation at all."

There was a little silence after this. The listeners changed attitudes and relaxed their attention, and John Smith came back to himself with a start, roused by a covert push from his wife.

"Well, that's comfortably out of the way," he remarked cheerfully. "I hope you're satisfied, Mac, and now we can go on to things I can understand. Mr. Corbett said he had some questions to ask. What was it you wanted to know, sir."

"Well," began the older man, somewhat hesitatingly. "In my busy life there has not been much time for philosophy, or for following scienti-

fic speculations, but in a vague way I have realized we were growing to understand that this constant change of form was going on, and that eventually our earth too would die—to use the common term—and I wondered what would become of us when it did. Where would we go when our home fell in ruins?”

“Yes,” John Smith chimed in eagerly. “That’s what I’d like to know. The other things—about where it all came from, and that, are too big for me, but where we’re going to in the end is something everybody’s interested in. Do, dear Lady, tell us about that.”

“The age of the Earth is so vast, and its continuance is likely to be so much vaster still,” she answered after a moment, “that it is really not a very pressing question. We are not likely to lose our dear roof-tree, or be evicted for a long, long while yet. Still, one can’t help speculating as to what will happen when that moving day does arrive. Of course it can be only a speculation, and we have to guess at it by the life we know, and do our reasoning on the subject by analogy. We see how very far we have come up from those diatoms, from that tiny fish. If the fish reasoned about it he must have been absolutely unable to make even the wildest guess that he would ever develop into what man is today. Yet he must have had upward yearnings and some sort of passionate hope for improvement or he never could have accomplished such an enormous step

194 The Case of John Smith

forward as the one he has made. So, I think, we have only the vaguest glimmer of what humanity may have grown to by the time the earth grows old and tired and asks for rest; for we too are striving and yearning upward still. We see that life never wholly forgets what it has learned, and we may be sure we shall not forget all this tremendous adventure here, even though we be vapourized with our world into star-dust again and begin once more the long climb in a new system of planets. What we shall have experienced by that far-off time—splendid, glorious things—we will carry on with us, ready, on the foundation of this knowledge, to rise to greater heights, to achievements inconceivably finer than what we made of life here.”

“Then you think we shall not sink again to forms as low as those from which we rose here?” Mr. Corbett asked hopefully.

“You know what Herbert Spencer thought, and what the Hindu meant by the Days and Nights of Brahma—that the process of nature is not one of continual upward progress, but rather of a circular movement from the utmost simplicity to the utmost complexity of being, and then back again to the original condition. No doubt Spencer reasoned from analogy too. He saw that nations rose to great heights of civilization, then dropped back into decadence, and other less civilized races took up the task, and went through the same round,—climbing high, and falling eventu-

ally into decay. Yet though we admit the analogy, still we also see that each new attempt seems to reach a little higher than the one before, and, that though we go round and round, each circle mounts a little, in a sort of ascending spiral, as if we had learned something and remembered it each time we tried. So that though we may have to go around the circle of evolution again it seems very probable that when we do it in another world we shall not have to begin so low, and shall in the end climb much higher than we have been able to in this earthly episode. We must certainly have travelled this round of development many times already, and no doubt on this earth we are improving enormously on anything we have ever been able to do before we came here."

"Well, for my part," interjected Alice Riggs brusquely, "all these First Causes and other worlds seem awfully far away, and we can attend to those things when we come to them. What I want to understand is what we ought to do now while we're in this world. I want some help with tomorrow and day after tomorrow. A million years from now can take care of itself."

"I think I feel the same way," laughed Eleanor. "There seem to me so many matters more immediately important than our final destiny. I have been thinking all these days whether by the light of this new point of view, we should not have to alter our ideas of pleasure and pain, of good and evil. Do, dear Spirit, talk to us about that."

196 The Case of John Smith

"I think," the Lady answered, "that I shall have to begin by asking you, like Socrates, to define your terms. What do you mean by Pain and Evil?"

"Oh," said Eleanor, a little confusedly, "everybody knows that already."

"Indeed, no. The definitions would probably vary with each definer. To have feet twisted and distorted would seem to you a most lamentable evil. The Chinese lady of rank might consider a foot of natural size a distressing affliction. Your father's daily life would seem to a Cossack an intolerable slavery; while the Cossack's wild rough existence would be an unbearable hardship to your father."

"I should say evil was not having what you wanted," announced Alice Riggs decidedly.

"That will hardly do either," the Spirit corrected, "because a pain may be not an evil. A drunkard, or a drug-eater might suffer abominably for want of more of the poison with which he was destroying himself, but that he should not have more would be anything but an evil. Five times out of ten gratification of our desires is almost an unmixed misfortune."

"Now that's true!" struck in John Smith. "The worst pain I ever went through in my life—that came near driving me to the dogs altogether—was because a girl I knew threw me over after we'd been engaged six weeks. I felt as if I would go mad. As if I simply couldn't bear my life

without her. That was before I met Nelly," he explained, with a contented glance toward his wife. "The girl married a chap I knew and she's simply spoiled his life with her selfishness and temper, and now every Christmas I always feel as if I'd like to send her a handsome present, just to show how grateful I am to her for what she did. Of course she wouldn't like it or understand, but it hardly seems right not to make some sort of return of such a big favour as she did me."

There was a smile all round at this naïve confession, and Nelly looked half-pleased, half-disapproving.

"As one grows older," Mr. Corbett commented, "it becomes more and more obvious that most of our sorrows were deepest blessings, whose nature we couldn't see because of our obsession by a passing desire. In my youth we used to hear a good deal about the efficacy of prayer, but of late years, looking back over life, it seems to me that the best thing we could desire would be very nearly a total denial of all we pray for. Mr. Smith's gratitude for his disappointment is a sensation one experiences many times in the course of a long life."

"Then you think," asked Winthrop rather rebelliously, "that most of our desires are unwise? That seems a rather paralysing doctrine. If one accepted such an idea it would hardly seem worth while to pursue anything with energy and ardour."

"No: hardly that," the older man replied.

198 The Case of John Smith

“The energy and ardour are good and desirable in themselves. The lesson experience teaches is that the resentment and pain we feel at the inability to get what we tried for is a mistake. If we accept defeat cheerfully and simply turn to other things we find shortly that we have no reason for regretting the defeat. That reptilian form we passed through on our way up would have probably felt it to be a tragedy and disaster that he could not make the reptilian form permanent, but now he knows, in us, that this passing on to something else was the better way.”

Winthrop looked mollified by this suggestion, and the Spirit said gently:

“You know the tale of the old man who said, ‘I have had a long life full of trouble—most of which never happened.’ . . . And so it is with all of us. The larger part of our troubles never happened; they existed only in our minds,—in apprehension of disaster and of change, in regret over changes really desirable and necessary, which later we considered desirable and necessary.

“Almost all the turmoil and wretchedness of our history has sprung from this same reptilian obstinacy against change, from the clamour for permanency for that we are familiar with. Each forward step has been taken in struggle against the weight and inertia of ignorance, yet looking back upon the past we see how wise, how necessary that step was if we were to pass to higher things. A large, generous flexibility has been so desirable and yet so

difficult to achieve. Religions have endeavoured to smother in blood and oppression every advance toward a wider truth, a finer liberty of the soul. Social and political organizations have battled brutally against the readjustments which gave them greater individual freedom of mind and body, and a more perfect combination of their units."

"But after all there *is* pain; there *is* evil." Eleanor insisted. "What I have been trying to understand is how this new truth we have found is going to help us to diminish both. I embrace with passionate delight the elimination of the fear of death, and all the evils that sprang from it, but, dear wise Spirit, I want you to make clear all the great new possibilities this fresh discovery opens to us."

There was some shifting and movement in the little audience. Mr. Corbett lit a cigar and leaned back more comfortably in preparation to listen, while Winthrop, too restless in his young vigour to sit still long, began to pace back and forth across the grass, his hands clasped behind him.

"It is just this pain and evil which our new freedom will leave us at liberty to deal with more efficiently," the Shining Lady began. "Heretofore the thought that somewhere else all injustice and inequality might be righted has made us over-tolerant of obvious abuses.

"First we will eliminate many of our pains and difficulties by seeing that they are not pains at all. We will have put aside the fear of death and of an

uncertain future life. We may go a little regretfully, a little wistfully sometimes to our bed—may feel reluctant to leave the warm hearthstone and the others chattering cheerfully about it, to pass into the darkness of sleep. Some of these companions will come with us to the door and protest that we leave them too soon, yet there will be no anguish nor despair. We will say good-night with a quiet tender kiss knowing that we are to meet again in the morning. And as we sink into unconsciousness we will pleasantly wonder what the new day is to bring forth of interest and surprise.

“And while we still move among our fellows we will be more gentle and indulgent of them, knowing that whatever their errors and peculiarities, their misunderstandings of us, tomorrow they may have a clearer view and wider tolerance, and the little jarrings of today’s life be forgotten during slumber.

“Envy, and jealousy of those who seem to have more than ourselves have been the most carking and demoralizing of our sufferings. Out of them has arisen all the violence, brutal greed, and slippery treachery which we use to deprive others and glut our own desires. From envy and jealousy spring our vilest crimes. By this new light these sins seem so fantastic and unnecessary. We see at last how rich we become by merely living. How little cause we have for envy—for think! Every child born is the heir of great wealth. Not

alone of the splendours of the natural world, but of values reckoned according to the old scale. It would be difficult to count the millions which the obscurest pauper in all civilized countries may consider as his own as soon as he draws breath, and which during all his life he never loses. To him belong the great galleries crammed with the rarest sculpture, pictures, treasures of art. Museums for which the world has been ransacked. Splendid parks blooming and burgeoning with beauty. Collections of rare animals, birds, fishes. Libraries bursting with stored thought. Hospitals rich and spacious in which he may command every resource of scientific healing. Schools, colleges, post-offices, churches; a thousand stately structures all his own.

“The sum of his belongings is so huge that the tiny accumulations of dukes and princes, of Rothschilds and Rockefellers seem but pittances by contrast. Reckon the money value of the public possessions of any great nation—it mounts into billions. And you and I own all this. It is all our property. We are, every one, eldest sons with the right of primogeniture, and power to leave these possessions to our children. No one is disinherited. The meanest citizen is richer in his own right than a thousand Croesuses—and all his neighbours are as rich as he.

“What fools we have been to think ourselves poor because we took no thought of the goods that we owned in common with others! . . .

“Realizing this we will utterly sweep away that peevish restlessness and blindness which closed our eyes to the enormous joys and pleasures of life:—the careless indifference with which we treated the inn, the mere tent pitched for the night, will change to reverence and love for home. We will set ourselves to adorn, cleanse, perfect, and keep wholesome the stately dwelling in which we are to abide for all of our waking and sleeping life. We will at once set about putting our house in order; will pride ourselves upon its glorious beauty and all the splendid treasures it contains, treating these treasures carefully, desiring not to injure and deface our property. I think when once we have learned all that this new truth means war will end. It is unthinkable that we should riot, burn, and pillage in our own dwelling, or permit others to do so.

“See what man is doing today in that beautiful chamber of the world which is called Europe. How he is breaking and burning its lovely ornaments, wrought through the centuries by so many patient and skilful hands. He fills it with wails and shriekings, with frenzy and anguish, smears it with blood and brains and rotting human flesh. It is like the crazy destruction of a madman who tears and rends his own dwelling in his insane illusion. All the toilsomely wrought civilization of the Western world totters to destruction under this lunatic assault. The insanity of war has been the great curse and stumbling-block

of humanity. Age after age man has built up beautiful and efficient schemes of living, and just as he neared perfection they have been brought down in ruins by some wild outbreak of greed, jealousy, and violence. Wars destroyed Babylon, Egypt, Persia, Greece, Rome, Spain, China, India. Each had rolled the stone of life so far up the hill of enlightenment and endeavour, and as it neared a happy top the obstacle of war sent it crashing down again into the abyss, and all that long Sisyphean task must be begun once again. Could he but once see that this is his own home, his own heaven, our poor wild benighted humanity would cease to rend and deface its dwelling, cease to transform its heaven to a raging hell.

“Cleansed of our madness we will learn at last how much less is the cost of justice than of violence, not only in suffering but in the product of our toil. Take as an example our own American Civil War. Had we set aside but a half of the money it cost and peaceably bought and freed the slaves, we should not only have saved the enormous toll of blood and sorrow but left ourselves, the slaves, and their owners, richer and happier as well—and the same is true of all other wars——”

Winthrop stirred a little restlessly and showed his dissent by the sudden tautening of his attitude. The Spirit turned to him so attentive and responsive a countenance he was emboldened to voice his comment a little hastily and hotly.

“It seems to me, Madam, that you are too

hopeful, too optimistic. Can you believe that even this new realization of our destiny will root up all our natural passions, our natural pugnacity? What could we hope for of growth and development if all our contest is to cease? It is just through combat that the fittest have survived and lived to breed an ever finer and more developed race."

"If that were wholly true," she replied gently, "the ever-warring savage races would have bred in time the much talked of Superman. But experience has shown that countries where law and order have never reigned have always remained savage. Central Africa: North America, until the coming of Columbus: Australasia, before being taken over by the British, never achieved to organized law and order, or any long periods of settled peace, and in spite of ever-recurring internal combat they bred no higher types capable of great mental or moral attainments. It is the races capable of intelligent organization, and the self-discipline required to preserve peace for considerable periods, which have done all the work of human growth and development. It was the great Pax Romanorum which lifted the rude savagery of Europe up to the point where it caught a vision of the meaning of civilization. So it has been that the enormous progress we have accomplished during the last century in the Western world has been due not to our great wars, but to the fact that the constant violence within each of these Western

nations has been almost entirely eliminated. Incessant revolts, blood feuds, vendettas, brigandage, highway robbery, duelling, street brawls have been so almost wholly abolished in all the Western countries that the average man lives his life without ever seeing human blood shed: within the limits of his nation's borders there is almost continuous peace."

"You think, then, that these new ideals will abolish national warfare?" asked Mr. Corbett somewhat dubiously.

"Ideals achieve but little," the Lady answered, "until they crystallize into intentions. When we fully intend to set our whole house in order we will find it an easy task. We have learned how to abolish violence within the nation, to oblige the individual to keep peace with his neighbour. We have only to extend the same system to the world at large to abolish brawls and feuds between nations, to oblige the national units to submit their disputes to tribunals as the individual unit must already do. To the fighting chiefs and barons of the Middle Ages, our internal peace and organization would have seemed as utopian an ideal as the universal acceptance of law and order seems to all the lesser minds of today."

"But how are we to settle the one form of internecine violence that still survives in modern civilization—the war between class and class?" asked Alexander MacDonald.

"I have shown you, I think," the Lady replied, "that when each of us realizes how richly each inherits there will be a great surcease of the envy, greed, and bitterness which now torment us, and which now divide our sympathies, but in setting about the new ordering of our lives we shall have to take into consideration a factor of the subject which until now seems to have been entirely ignored."

MacDonald raised his eyebrows.

"In all the vast threshing out of the dispute between labour and capital I didn't suppose there could possibly have been overlooked any question that bore on the subject," he said interestedly. "I would like beyond anything to know what it is."

"You remember," the Teacher said, "that until very recently, even in the most enlightened countries, the mother of a child had no legal claim to it, though no one would be inclined to dispute that she had an extremely important share in producing it. The argument was, of course, and still is in the more backward countries, that as the father was legally responsible for the child's defence and maintenance he had the sole right to control and benefit by its existence. Now, as you know, of course, all wealth is produced by the marriage of capital and labour, yet the legal attitude has been that the father—capital—has a right to all the increment from that wedding of the two forces. Labour, like the mother of the human child, was entitled to a maintenance but not to a right to the

control, or management, or benefit of this increase. This legal attitude must be changed."

"Marx, and many others insist that labour is the only creator of wealth," the Scotchman suggested.

"As unwise and unjust an attitude as the other," she answered. "The two forces must mingle for this birth of new wealth. Some form of capital there must always be in the shape of stored seeds, tools, raw material, transport, without which labour cannot generate wealth. Each must have its wages of whatever the market price may be, for capital earns its fixed wages as does labour, but until now whatever profit there might remain after these charges had been paid went all to the fecundating parent, capital. The germinating parent, labour, could hope for no more than the human mother—neither control nor benefit from the child it had brought forth—only a maintenance. Here and there efforts are being made to right this injustice, and when those efforts are wisely made, where not only the two forces share profits but also share responsibility and control, peace and content as well as an added prosperity result."

"Yes, I know of the success of some of those profit-sharing schemes," said MacDonald, "but I had not thought of them as the mother-labour coming into its own. That puts a new and broader meaning into the whole question. It would mean a happier marriage of the two forces, of course—and a wider and better life for the child, profit, too,"

he laughed. "Yet when one talks profit-sharing to nine capitalists out of ten, nine of them admit the idea is a good one for other men's business, but never thinks it applicable to his own."

"That is true of all suggested changes," the Lady continued. "We blunder and muddle along the old ruts of life: ruts that we know to be narrow and desperately inconvenient, yet if a broader and smoother road be suggested we furiously resent being asked to leave the discomforts and disadvantages of our old path of war and injustice, of blood and wrong. But if the house we inhabit is to be at last set in order we must leave the ruts. We must sit down seriously to reconsider all our arrangements with a fresh clear view."

"Ah, dear Lady," interjected Mr. Corbett, "inspire us with the Spirit of Understanding and teach us how it is to be done!"

"It is by teaching that it must be done," she replied. "We shall have to alter our whole system of education. The young come into our hands so ductile, so plastic. We can make of them what we will. Instead of moulding their waxen minds into the old shapes, hanging them with the inherited chains, closing them into the iron boxes, let us show them that they are heirs of all the glories: destined for great careers. Let us train them not wholly in the study of the past, but let them see the possibilities of the future. Let them learn more by doing, and to see how fascinating, how delightful is the noble play which we have wrongly called

work. In one generation we could alter the whole attitude of the minds of the race by teaching them that this house in which they live is their own; that in it they will wake and sleep for millions of years. By teaching them that they must keep it in order, and make life possible and pleasant for all the family, work and play together and enjoy the pleasures spread to their hands for the taking. So far they have been allowed to be unruly and ill-bred—soiling and injuring the house, wrangling, fighting, gluttonous, noisy; feverishly demanding unwholesome diversions, petulant, wilful, slovenly, vulgar—that pathetic and repugnant creature, a spoiled child. All our education has been so inchoate, vague, and undisciplined we can hardly wonder that the result has not been satisfactory.”

“But we have been so ignorant ourselves, alas!” sighed Mr. Corbett. “How were we to teach more than we knew?”

“We at least knew,” the Lady said with some severity in her tone—“that dull drudges were not fitted for the very highest work of the world: that of preparing the minds, hearts, and souls of man for the days of his life. Yet we have offered such meagre, stingy rewards for this work that only a very few of the best would enter this which should be the noblest of professions. We should have called to this work our finest minds, and rewarded their splendid labours with honours and wealth—not have given this task to those who

were content to be put far below in current value to our jockies and professional ball-players."

There was a little interval of silence, and then Eleanor said in mock reproach:

"These others have drawn you away from my question, which has not had all its answer yet. Won't you go back and tell me more about my query?"

"You were asking how our new-found truth was to lessen pain and evil—what were some of the possibilities it contained for our happiness. I think this new attitude will make us look upon much that we have felt to be pain and evil from a new angle; an angle that will alter their meaning and aspect. First we will realize that we are enormously richer and happier than we supposed. The sense of injustice and wrong will be eliminated because we will realize our large opportunities, our great possessions. Having so much we will not be driven to make for ourselves, as we do now, hideous repulsive counterfeits of pleasures which result only in final bitterness and dreary disgust. We will be able to avoid that sorrowfulest of evils, the discouragement of failure—knowing that though we have not attained to our ends today, yet tomorrow and tomorrow and all the to-morrows are ours in which to try again and finally succeed. We will not live in the house of our body as in a wretched inn which we roughly abuse and allow to fall to decay, so that we dwell there comfortlessly. We will realize that ignorance concern-

ing the proper care of our bodily home is not pardonable, and we will bestir ourselves to keep it clean, sweet, and pure; a joyous and delightful residence for all our waking time. Being such a place the children born of it will start fairly in the world, not burdened with debt of our old vices and slovenly self-indulgences, but trained from the very beginning in a knowledge of what their duty is in turn to the bodies we have given them.

“We will grow more dainty too in our mental and physical appetites.

“And so in small matters as well as great we will be in every way more careful of our conduct. This is our heaven. Here we spend a large part of our immortal life. We will open our eyes to see, and our hands to take the heavenly joys that lie about us. As Nelly has said—‘If this is heaven then we must be very careful not to do anything to spoil it.’ In every way we will develop a new sense of responsibility. There will be no object in snatching at every momentary gratification, gorging ourselves with what we desire, not knowing when we shall feast again, because now we have a sense of a large tremendous leisure in which to taste delights day after day. Every day the table will be spread, the lights be lit, the hearth will glow, our friends cluster about us. We will walk gently and carefully in our own rooms, and shrink from destroying and befouling them. We will not be degraded by jealousy, greed, and envy, knowing that everything in the house is our very

212 The Case of John Smith

own and that no one can take them from us. If some members of the family occupy for the moment a larger room than the one we live in, yet our little chamber is crammed full of treasures too, and some day we may wake and find the larger room exchanged for our smaller one,—and perhaps after all not like it quite so well or find it so snug and convenient as the cubicle we now occupy. In our new leisure, our sense of wide time, we will think it worth while to take up the largest and noblest endeavours. Even if full result is not achieved by nightfall we can go from the work contentedly, knowing others will labour on it while we sleep, and in the morning we can resume the splendid task.

“So you see that more than half of what we now know of pain and evil will simply cease to be pain and evil when we have readjusted our point of view, when we have examined it by the light of truth.”

“Yes: I think I can see all that,” Eleanor went on again, her eyes full of dreams, “and yet there is bodily pain . . . and sin— You know so much of the suffering of the world arises from what others do. No matter how well we try to behave ourselves yet we cannot escape from the terrible effects of the bad behaviour of others. And what becomes of the wicked when they sleep? Do they wake again with all their evil fresh and vitalized, or are they purified?”

“I will try to answer your first question, and then we will consider the others.

"You remember the Buddha's Four Noble Truths? . . . There seem to be also Four Ignoble Sins—Fear, Ignorance, Sloth, and Obstinacy, and from these four spring most of the sorrows of the world. Now the bodily pains spring mostly from the last three. And the sins from all four, but especially from the last three. For half of our sins are simply the results of want of health—physical and mental. You know from your own experience what bitterness, peevishness, suspicion, selfishness, gloom, and despair assail us in illness. Passing from disease to clear perfect health we look back in amazement on the state of our sick minds, and wonder at its darkness and distortion of facts. . . .

"Now the first duty of setting our home in order is to set in order our bodies—the chambers in which we are to pass our day. We ourselves can choose whether the world is to be our heaven or hell, and this choice consists in large measure of whether we choose to be well or ill. For this is largely—almost wholly—a question of our own choice.

"You recall how the Buddha taught that man must save his own soul—that no ministrations of priests, no prayers, no sacrifices would avail; only in seeing the truth for himself, and in following the Path of Right Thought, Right Purpose, Right Behaviour, Right Purity could he hope to reach to the blessed Nirvana.

"So it is with our bodily health, as with the spiritual. We cannot cast the burden upon the

priests of healing. Not occasional alms, or sacrifices, or prayers for miracles will stay the inevitable turning of the wheel of natural law. To reach the heaven of physical and mental peace and poise we ourselves must tread the Way of Rightness. The Law cannot be bribed, or tricked, or wheedled.

"It has always been our weak and passionate desire to escape from law. We have wanted always to get the good without paying for it—to eat our cake and have it too. Both bodily and spiritually we are forever trying to swindle, or to escape just penalties. The law of gravity we respect, and the potency of fire. We are quite convinced that if we throw ourselves into an abyss we will be very much damaged, and the same law will act inflexibly if we plunge into a raging fire, but all the other laws we hope to escape by some skilful chicanery, to creep under or around them, or find them inattentive to our particular breach of the regulations. This respect for gravity and fire is due, of course, to the swiftness with which they punish. The slower action of the others induces us foolishly to imagine them more lenient, because their inevitable penalties may not be exacted all at once. We are forever sinning and trying to convince ourselves that 'a beautiful moment' of repentance will readjust the scales. We are forever getting into debt and hoping someone else will redeem our bond. We continually offend against our bodies and bribe the physician to wash us clean of the sin with drugs, as the priest is to wash out our moral

stains with prayers and censing. We find it so much easier to gabble prayers and swallow nostrums than to refrain from our material and spiritual vices, though we have no delusion about prayers or drugs assuaging the vengeance of fire and gravity. We run round and round and frantically dodge the narrow gate of self-control through which law is sternly shepherding us, and half of us dash our lives out against the wall of fact rather than admit that we must travel through that rigid passageway to health and virtue.

"We must at last accept it. We shall be free and happy only when we have yielded, and have honestly endeavoured to meet the exactions of the laws of health—Activity, Cleanliness, Temperance, Courage.

"Fear, ignorance, sloth, and obstinacy must be put behind us. First we must have the 'Will to Live,' and to live rightly. And this will we can make for ourselves. Not all at once, perhaps, but step by step, as a child learns to walk—creeping first, then tottering, stumbling, falling many times, but trying, trying till the feet learn to run surely and safely. This will to live teaches the courage that casts out fear, seeks knowledge, overcomes indolence, and breaks down the obstinacy engendered of ignorance and sloth. You have seen how the founder of Christian Science has helped thousands toward health by discovering how deeply fear lay at the base of all illness, and how by developing the courage to turn away from

the thought of disease we could lessen its hold upon us. Then ignorance of the laws of health must give place to knowledge. The will to live will teach us how to seek for knowledge; for sloth in seeking, and sloth in living by that knowledge when found will yield to a persistent will. Not a mere lazy desire for health, but a strong determined will to have it by the abandonment of indolence and self-indulgence."

"Oh!" broke in Alice Riggs sharply. "It's easy enough to say all those general things, but what I'd like to know is just exactly what you ought to do to be well. Everybody gives you that general, vague sort of advice,—a sort of 'sweeten to taste' advice. What I want to have is the whole thing down in black and white. A 'do this,' and 'do that' kind of help, so that you'd know how to begin tomorrow. It would be awfully nice," she went on a little wistfully, "not to feel dragged and tired all the time."

The Shining Lady looked at her with deep kindness. "That flat you are so proud and fond of, Alice," she said; "you tell us how careful you are it should always be in order. . . . I suppose the order is not merely to the eye, but that you and your housemates really keep it clean, even in places where a visitor would not know if it were tidy or not. You air and brush it every day, and see that everything is in its place? . . ."

"Why, of course!" said Alice rather indignantly. "You didn't suppose we forgot to sweep

under the beds, did you? We all get up an hour earlier than we used in the boarding-house so's we can leave it perfect when we go out to our work for the day. It's so restful to come back and find everything shining and in the exact spot it belongs."

"Did it ever occur to you that you should keep yourself as well as you do your house? Do you remember that your body is the house you live in, and that it too should be aired and cleaned every day? Not only on the outside where others can see it but inside as well. You would scorn a woman who left dirt lying about in hidden corners; left beds unmade, and rooms stale and stuffy. Such indolent sluttishness would seem disgusting to you, but are you sure that the interior of the house in which you live is in order? Is it aired and washed inside, and rid of all refuse every day? Do you labour to keep it clean, fresh, and sweet? Or are you ignorant, indifferent, and neglectful?"

"I never thought about it . . . I suppose I am. . . ." Alice stammered an embarrassed reply. . . . "But how do you keep yourself clean and sweet inside? . . ."

"Just as you do your house. You wash your body-house inside and out with plenty of water. You ventilate your blood and lungs with streams of deep-drawn fresh air. You force the blood, by swift active exercise, to sweep and dust your house from top to toe, so that that quick, aired stream

will bathe every organ, tissue, and nerve, and push away all dirt and refuse."

"Oh—but that takes time and a lot of work..."

"There's the old cry of sloth, and obstinacy, which is at the root of nearly all our bodily ills. It's the same cry the sluttish housekeeper makes. She would like her house clean and sweet—if she was not obliged to give time and work to achieve it, but rather than give up her slouching indolence she will live in repulsive squalor, poisoning herself and her neighbour."

"It sounds horrible, put that way," Eleanor remonstrated. "You make one feel very uncomfortable."

"It does not sound nearly so unpleasant as it is. You know how deeply the world at large has been affected by the attitude of the few that it is vulgar and ill-bred to be obviously dirty. Consequently much more time is spent upon hair, teeth, nails, and skin than many a lazy soul would give to them were they not afraid of the contempt of their neighbours. In time this public opinion will force the idle and slovenly to take the same pains with the insides of their bodies as they now do with the outside. Illness will be held to be ill-bred and vulgar, because we will understand that most disease is simply the result of self-indulgent slovenliness. The State now claims the right to enforce decent behaviour as to public health. Foul premises are not permitted, for it is realized that the well-being of the community demands from every-

one the care and energy required to keep one's surroundings wholesome and sanitary, and public contempt and resentment reinforce the rules of the State. So, eventually, the State will require from everyone that they expend the patience and effort required to keep their own persons wholesome and non-infectious. Laziness, ignorance, and obstinacy will not be permitted to jeopardize the happiness and lives of others by wilfully preferring ill health to good, for everyone not in sound and vigorous health is a centre sending out waves of injury and depression upon all about them.

"You have seen how the State is slowly, but inevitably forcing the baser sort to abandon the abuse of alcohol, and how public opinion constantly brings more and more aid to this endeavour. Two generations ago the 'three-bottle man' who subsided—a sour, ill-smelling, repulsive lump—under the dinner table each night was considered rather a dashing good fellow. Now a man who should fall drunken from his chair at his own or his neighbour's table would be tabooed by everybody as a detestable beast.

"In course of time we will be equally severe with the gluttony now so nearly universal. We will look back then with as much scorn and astonishment on the present gorging of huge quantities of unnecessary food as we do now upon the wine swilling of the past. The man who emerges from his meals, stuffed, flushed, distended with food will be reckoned as gross and repulsive as the

drunkard. For though the effects are not so immediately obvious he eventually grows as sour, ill-smelling, and repulsive as the drunkard. He is a centre of disease and injury, and sins against his neighbours and his descendants almost as flagrantly as the wine bibber. No activity, no exercise will sweep away the superfluities he has engorged, or make him clean, sweet, and wholesome.

"Intoxication in the past was smiled at indulgently as a venial sin, as we now leniently look upon gluttony, but there are no venial sins of the body. Ignorance, indolence, intemperance are deadly and cruel, for no man can sin against himself alone. All humanity is knitted in so close a web that no man can wrong himself without wronging his neighbours. To fall below his best possible in either health or morals is to lower the whole scale. Every weakness or wickedness of thought and act stab, bruise, harden, depress in a thousand directions that the doer or the thinker never knows. Just as the very smallest deed or impulse of courage, energy, self-denial, kindness, radiates warmth and aid far beyond the ken of the person in whom it originates.

"You have heard it said that we are to love our neighbour as ourself—but one reason we do so poorly by our neighbours is that we love him no more than we do ourselves. Real love means a joyous willingness to labour and sacrifice for the object beloved. If we truly loved our own personality no effort, or immolation, or control of

sensual appetite would seem too great if it procured for us the best perfection, but see how ruthlessly we condemn our bodies and spirits to misery. We poison ourselves with gross indulgences, and lust; blight and starve ourselves from indolence and neglect; cramp and darken our lives with ignorance and prejudice; rack and torture ourselves through wilful blindness and the dull obstinacy of prejudice. Did we treat our neighbour half so ill we would be infamous in man's history. . . .

"You have also heard of the Sin against the Holy Ghost—a vague undefined offence too monstrous to be shrived even by the Great Atonement. Its nature was never clearly expressed, but we were uneasily conscious—in the dim way that man is conscious of all the eternal truths—that such a sin, awful, unpardonable, it was possible to commit. The Sin against the Holy Ghost is to offend against ourselves—against the immortal Spirit of Life within us. Not to do the best possible, not to find and tread the road of highest growth and development toward perfection is to sin against the Holy Ghost of the Race; this is the deepest and blackest of all crimes, for it is to halt and baffle the whole Universe, with which we are inextricably knitted.

"No man can be and do evil to himself alone. To be lax, ignorant, foolish, self-indulgent, brutal, slothful, weak, diseased, is to become a repulsive cancer upon the body of the world, poisoning, devouring, rotting all about us.

"Until we learn to love ourselves with a beautiful, noble love—pouring out unremitting passionate devotion in the effort to perfect ourselves—we shall never learn to truly love our neighbour."

Winthrop Corbett ceased his pacing to listen to this, and drew a sharp breath of uneasy protest.

"Really—if you will permit me to say so, Great Lady—you have the most startling, disturbing way of putting things. All this makes one very uncomfortable. Are we not to have any pleasant easy bad habits, and gentlemanly vices? Can't we be just a little gluttonous, and drunken, and amorous, and indolent, and genially ignorant without considering ourselves an odious disgusting canker?"

"That is just what the thief says. 'Can't I pick out of the till a little?—forge a small cheque now and then? Cheat at cards about once a week?—take another man's labour three or four times a year, and forget to pay him and still look upon myself as on the whole an honourable gentleman entitled to the respect of good society.'"

"Ah! my friend, the one thing man has really respected and has held truly sacred is money. When that is touched then we drop our beautiful indulgent spirit, that fine charity we consider such a lovable trait, and say sternly: 'As long as you hurt only bodies and souls by your vices we will be very gentle with you. To steal from those, to rob the treasures of the race is after all what a generous high-spirited gentleman need have no qualms

about. We can't be on our good behaviour all the time. Such rigidity would be very wearisome, but Money!—that's *quite* another thing. . . . You must be honest every day and all day. Not the smallest step aside can be overlooked or pardoned. We will listen to no pleas about temptation, about the weakness of the flesh. Your conduct must be flawless at all times or you'll be kicked out. Even if it's only a few dollars from the till, only a few shillings or francs won by palming a card, that is no excuse. It's the principle we maintain; the size of the gain is not taken into consideration. . . . And money being a really holy thing we do exact perfect rectitude. When it comes to bodies and souls—Ah! that's a different matter. . . . How absurd and puritanical to expect to make humanity virtuous by statute. A man must be allowed his little knaveries, his little swindlings in matters of that sort, for bodies and souls are not sacred and serious objects like money. . . . Sacrilege against the Race if you like, but don't touch the Ark of the Covenant of property!"

The young man laughed uncomfortably.

"I must not argue with you, Madam. I always get the worst of it."

"Because you are arguing against your own understanding—against your own innate perception of right and wrong. I am only your deeper, truer self refuting what you try in vain to convince yourself of."

"There is still my second question unanswered,"

reminded Eleanor, with feminine tenacity. "How do we atone for our sins against ourselves and others? Does the sleep purify us, and do we wake quite pure and clean?"

"Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs from thistles? . . . You have seen how gardeners choose their seeds for the coming season's culture from the finest and sturdiest of their plants. The Asian vision of the Karma was the continual personal expiation of sin done in one life by the pain and suffering of the next one. It was a manly, straightforward, lofty creed. What one had stolen from the sum of effort toward perfection one must pay again sooner or later. The limitation of the Eastern idea was the rigid sense of individuality. A man atoned for his own sins; not for those of other men. This, alas! is but a part of the truth. A man who has smallpox, or cholera, not only dies himself but he slaughters thousands. So close is our tie to all our fellows that we cannot sin without poisoning the whole world. Every time we are brutal, treacherous, greedy, we fill others with fear, distrust, and cruelty. Those who see it say instinctively, 'in a world of fang and claw I must use fangs and claws, or perish.' Every wrong and incompetence of which we are guilty engenders wrong, and hampers progress toward good. When an individual does evil death cleanses him and brings him back to life innocent, but he returns to find that the evil he has done has lived and must be met and suffered from. Men, he

becomes aware, are still cruel, still gross and violent and weak and traitorous because of the impress he helped to make on the spirit of his race. His bafflements and sorrows, his wrongs and sufferings are largely his own legacy to himself."

"How terrible!" Nelly cried, shivering. "It frightens me to think of it."

"My dear," her Teacher said gravely, "it should frighten everyone to think of it. No one can say 'I choose to do evil. I choose to be obstinate, to be weak and slothful and self-indulgent. It is nobody's business but my own.' . . . It is everybody's business. As well might a loathesome disease say 'this is nobody's business but my own' while it was rotting and devouring a man's body. It is terribly the business of the whole wretched victim. . . .

"But think!" she went on tenderly, laying her warm fingers on Nelly's clasped and trembling hands. "Think of the good that men do. For that too is immortal. Every kindness, every strength, every sweetness, blesses not only ourselves but the whole world. Every nobility of ours makes life better and pleasanter for our children, for our children's children, for every creature born, and for ourselves when we rise once more from sleep. And the good grows. Slowly, very slowly, but surely it grows and spreads and overcomes evil. Everyone who has striven valiantly to do his best—though he may seem defeated and forgotten in the end—has blessed a million million

of his fellows, and himself over and over again. The man who found fire—who knows his name?—but he lifted the whole race. The man who first devised alphabets and written characters—the woman who first span, made pots, baskets, cloth—the discoverer of music and painting—the first moulder of bricks—the inventor of iron tools—the first maker of a boat, a wheel, a brush, a pen, a plough. All these have been destroyers of evil, makers of good. And the humblest, obscurest life lived cleanly and kindly and bravely has lifted and taught us all and made existence happier for every generation. Not one gentle word or deed, not one act of courage, not one effort toward perfection has been wasted. It was by using every power to the utmost, by choosing always the best as far as it could be seen that the reptile climbed up to be Shakespeare.”

XIV

VERY grave was the little group gathered in the accustomed place.

The waning moon had not yet risen, and the stars glimmered palely in a sky spread with a thin veil of mist. The night wind sighing softly through the withering leaves was milkily warm, but a faint hint of autumn chill was in the air, and the women had thrown light scarves about their shoulders.

Wisdom's
Gate

"But why should this be the end?" John Smith demanded rebelliously. "Why should you ever leave us?"

"Unless you repulse me I never shall leave you," the Spirit of Understanding explained patiently. "Always when you appeal to me I shall be beside you, ready to help and counsel, to explain and advise, but in bodily presence you shall see me no more. It was necessary that I should come in a guise visible to your senses, lest the things I had to say might seem some dream or vain imagining, which perhaps you might have repulsed or distrusted. Now that the lesson that needs must be taught has been learned my appearance to your eyes and ears is no longer required.

"Very beautiful," she went on tenderly, "have our talks and journeys been, but now your daily lives must be taken up again; these meetings make a break in the course of living, and in any event could not continue forever. So let us say farewell to this phase without too much regret, knowing that each and all of you are forever in loving accord with the Spirit of Understanding."

The golden voice paused, and no one of her listeners could for a while summon the will, or the firmness of tone to reply, remembering that outward eye and ear were to lose the music and beauty of her noble presence.

It was Mr. Corbett who first found speech, and, clearing his throat of the little constricting pain which the realization of their coming loss had brought, he began earnestly.

"Dear and Lovely Spirit, you are, as always, wise. Yet we cannot but feel—mortals as we are—almost like children letting go of a mother's guiding hand. It is best of course that we should learn to walk by the new light you have given us along the daily paths, and we must not ask forever for the helping fingers to lead us. Before you go, however, can you not once more make clear, in a sort of doctrine, all you have desired us to know?"

"Not a 'doctrine,'" she corrected. "The word implies a dogma, and that we desire above all things to avoid. It is the tendency of man always to wish to organize and crystallize any teaching into a fixed and definite form to which bounds are set; to

question any phase of which is a heresy. Now Truth will not be bound by any dogma. No bonds of doctrine will restrain for long its natural mighty growth. We must remain always glad and ready to find more and more truth, to see it always clearer, and apply it in new ways to new conditions. What we have been doing is simply to study the truths man has discovered in his long pilgrimage, his long study of himself and his environment, and to endeavour to piece together these scattered fragments from all lands and peoples into a living coherent whole.

"What we have made of our search and efforts is but a nucleus around which to build. Constantly more and more truth will be discovered, and with each new discovery we shall see fresh implications in what we already know. Gaps will be filled, outlines cleared, more living colours will display themselves, and always the picture will grow more vivid and inspiring. We must beware of any rigid doctrine that would shut out, perhaps, the new fragments needed to perfect the splendid whole."

"But I was not here from the first," remonstrated Alice Riggs plaintively. "Please say over what it means, so that it will all seem clear when I try to live by it. I don't just want to think about it, I want to act by it."

"Bravo, Alice!" the Lady cried. "That is what truth is needed for. Not merely for an opinion or a dogma, but for a guide for the actions of one's everyday life."

“First of all, I think, we must realize the meaning of thought—that it is not a vague, intangible thing having no true meaning or potency. We must grasp the fact that it is the greatest potentiality in the Universe. By it all is made or marred. What we think, that we are.

“The thought of growth, of development, of rising to higher forms and powers has been the impulse of evolution—not only of men, but of worlds. For there is no dead unthinking matter. The tiniest atom has the thought of change, of movement, of coalescence, of evolution. We who have risen so far have a thought of perfection that drives us onward forever. We have called our thought God—the Absolute—the Ultimate, and imagined ourselves springing from it, but the dream is not our origin but our goal. It is that

‘Far off, divine event
To which the whole creation moves.’

It is what we are trying to be; what we are reaching, yearning, striving to through unutterable lapses of time. Through endless inefficiencies, bafflements, incompetencies we move. Each wave falls back, but rises and pushes onwards once again, reaching a little farther with each effort, until some day,—some day so distant the mind fails before the reckoning of it,—we shall mount to the full tide of our eternal aspiration.

“Meantime what we think here we will be.

Never yet have we realized the enormous unused powers within us. The Pragmatists begin to see that; begin to urge us to strive to find and develop our deeper powers. Christian Science has shown us a little the potencies we possess. Has been a real service in spite of coming dressed in the rags of mediævalism and clinging to magic formulæ. As electricity lay to our hands always, without a glimmer penetrating to our imagination of the prodigious forces we were allowing to waste unused, so but recently have we begun to guess of the unused potencies of our own will and thoughts to make us what we wish to be. This is the greatest legacy I leave you. This well of power yet undefined. . . .

"Next, I think, we must realize that we are not entirely separate entities living shut up forever in a rigid personality, like a hard indestructible atom in the midst of a fluid Universe. Luckily that is not true, for how shocking it would be to be immortally William Jones, if William Jones be weak and mean and cowardly. Of course it might be said that later on he was to be changed from all that and be quite a different person. . . . Exactly!—he then *is* changed and is no longer William Jones. So we are always being made new: are being born again with a fresh opportunity to try once more, to repair our old errors and feeblenesses and rise to what we just missed or failed of last time. The mercy and patience of life are infinite. None are hopelessly condemned. Always

and always one may have another chance. The way is not easy: no one will pay our debts, relieve us of our sins. The law is there—fixed, immutable; it must be obeyed; in spite of writhings, protests, constant efforts at evasion, we must in the end conform, and pass through the one and only gate, which is acceptance of the rules, which leads to harmony with life. But at last—even after a thousand failures and rebellions—we may rise to the truth and be at peace, may be happy and whole.

“No: instead of being that rigid atom we are one with all that is. We have passed through suns and stars and systems, and will again. We have had enormous and glorious experiences, and experiences still more glorious await us. Meantime we find ourselves here for the passing adventure on this earth of some hundreds of millions of years. In this adventure we have passed through a thousand thousand phases, and today we find ourselves still changing, developing, growing. Always growing, happily; always mounting by slow steps, but climbing higher and higher. We look back at the fish, the reptile, and the ape, and joy in our great progress. We look forward into the future—and no more able to guess what it holds for us than the fish guessed man—we yet know that the law of climbing is within us, and seeing our immense development from the past we know, with joy, that it will be equally great in the future. That future is a dazzling thought—a glorious hope—a noble intention!

We have learned too that we do not die. We sleep when night comes, and wake refreshed in the morning to begin again our ascent up the long slow curve of development. We know that every right effort, every noble impulse smooths and accelerates the climb, every weakness and meanness delays not only ourselves but each and every one of our companions. Once knowing that fully we will surely shrink ashamed and aghast before so far-reaching and monstrous a crime.

"Brushing the blindness and prepossession of ignorance from our eyes, we see ourselves already surrounded with incredible beauties and joys, with endless means of happiness. We fling away the foolish fears and obstinacies, the fantastic conventions and stupidities that have heretofore marred our lives. We behold ourselves rich beyond all the dreams of fable—the owners of a splendid planet, of sun and moon and stars, of seas and mountains, of clouds and crystal air; of rainbows, rivers, forests, fruits, flowers—a wealth incredible. We see at last how foolish we were to value only the things made with hands, the things bought with money; money which could never purchase a millionth part of the treasures that are ours for the taking.

"Seeing this all things fall into their rightful place. We realize that we have been the prisoners of our own thoughts, and that those thoughts turned to knowledge and wisdom and goodness strike the manacles from off our limbs and lead

us forth from the dungeons of our own ignorance into freedom and joy. We learn the true lesson the Greeks had to teach—the Greeks who built no temples to death or fear, or evil; worshipping only the symbols of Light, Beauty, and Wisdom. . . .

“They found so much of the truth—those great people. They had so deep a respect for the bodies in which they lived, were so careful to perfect them, to keep them at the highest point of efficiency, knowing that happiness and mental development were for the most part a question of health—a question of cleanliness, temperance, activity. They poetized the world about them, profoundly aware that only thus can one see the world as it truly is. The heavens above with all their shining hosts, the earth beneath, the sea, the mountains, the rivers, trees, brooks, the vine, the corn, they felt to be as living as themselves, and they expressed this sense of life by a symbolic legendizing, by lovely myths of indwelling personalities. So that whether they looked above, below, on either hand, there glimmered beneath the outward surface of things lovely opaline lights of association that humanized and personalized and brought near to them the great life of the universe, thereby saturating themselves with beauty, and enriching and enhancing the delight of existence. They had, too, so little fear of death. All their mortuary monuments show that;— never skeletons, or grisly horrors, or cries for help. All was peaceful, calm,

tender, dignified. A noble lady gives her casket of jewels to her servant, as one who would lie down to sleep and must not be troubled during her repose by worldly cares. A charming youth caresses his hound with a half-wistful regret, and hands his unstrung bow to his comrade. They have no more to do here, but do not dream of being torn shrieking and despairing from the sun, rather it is as one who goes, half-reluctantly perhaps, but composedly to rest, since the day is done and night falls. . . .

"You can see how much they divined, how they stood upon the very edge of the full truth.

"It is because of that divination, of that composed right thinking they have so inspired and modified the world; that forever from the darkness of wintry imaginings blooms again and again Hellenic thought to refresh and renew the race with the flowers of their clean, wholesome vision of the meaning of things. . . .

"Seeing that we are here for such unreckonable years in this home of our lives we will wake to a new and overwhelming sense of our responsibility for what happens here, for what conditions are made for others and for ourselves. Very difficult will it be for those of us who grasp these truths to live carelessly, selfishly, recklessly. It has happened again and again in history that a wild lad, ruthlessly seeking his own amusement at any cost, has been transformed almost between sun and sun to nobility and highminded devotion to duty by

being transferred to a position of authority and large obligation. So we, growing aware of our immediate responsibility for the growth and development of man in all the world, and all who are to come for all the ages, must thereby be shaken out of our greedy self-absorption, our wilful ignorance and carelessness into a wholly new sense of our immensely important moral place in the universe. It will fill us with a new pride and a new humility. . . .

"With this readjustment of our conceptions we will straighten the tangles of existence, will bring order out of our disorderly human organization. The fantastic misplacements of values will be rectified, for each will at last be reckoned at his innate worth.

"By the illumination of this new clear thought we see the artificial divisions between man and man shrivel like scorched paper and drop into nothingness. We see that the coal miner is engaged in the most romantic and poetic of businesses, that the gardener is the hierarch of beauty, the farmer the high priest of life. We put aside humility, for we realize that however small and unimportant we may seem—judged by the old prejudices—each member of the race is as important as any other. We know that in a great building the foundations buried out of sight are more necessary than the towering spire soaring into the blue; that the brick hidden in the walls is more useful than the foliage carved upon the portals. We shall feel

no envy or resentment of the spire or the carvings, because we know neither could exist without our help. The foot will not hate the hand because it knows the hand to be its debtor, nor the hand scorn the foot knowing that without its generous aid it could not live. Humility has been a virtue long praised by those who wished to rule, but for humility we will substitute pride—pride in our power to serve, to give, to aid all the universe in our great business of growth. . . .

“One of the proudest, most contented creatures I know—” the Speaker broke off to explain with a laugh—“is a laundress. She has the qualities of our great mother, Earth. She takes each week the soiled and the cast aside and transforms them to things of delight—shining, crisp, perfumed, and delectable. When her great hampers of snowy cleanliness leave her hands her face glows with pleasure and dignity. She has blessed her little world with work well done, with a fine gift of skill and labour, and she knows herself a benefactor to life. She envies no one, for she feels herself, because of her earnestness and fidelity in the task existence has set for her, the equal of the best.”

“Oh! I like that story,” cried Alice Riggs.

“It is a nice story, and a nice woman. . . . She had no need of lessons from me. She knew the truth by instinct. I think she must have been in other days of her living very fine and strong and straightforward always. Each time she woke she was cleaner and finer, and found the World-House

238 The Case of John Smith

in which she lived cleaner and pleasanter because of the work she had done in the yesterdays. Some day in the future when she may wake to be a queen, or a poet, or the mother of men, she will again take the soiled and the cast aside and—on a great scale—transform them to things of delight; to things shining, perfumed, and delectable.”

“Madam,” said Alexander MacDonald in a moved voice, “you make things seem so new, so different. . . . My mother washed for a living. She earned the education I got with her two little red soapy hands. I always hated and resented it before, but I remember she used to look at the baskets of clean clothes in just the way you describe. It makes life seem better to me to think of her the way you put it. . . . I think when she wakes again I must be sure she finds that I have been taking as good care of her House as I can while she is asleep.”

Alice Riggs gave a little gasp of sympathy and admiration as he paused. She said nothing, but the eyes of the man and woman met and lingered in a long deep look, while John Smith and Nelly exchanged a quiet suggestive smile.

“This is what I came for,” the Lady said. “It is the reason for my being, that those I serve should see things as they really are. . . . Do you remember,” she went on in a lighter tone, “the old sign-posts which used to stand at the grade crossings of the railways years ago? On them was painted in large black letters ‘Stop! Look!

Listen!' Now, I am that sign-post. I say to you Stop! Look! Listen! . . . Stop, and let us steadily and seriously consider life. Let us sit quietly down and endeavour to understand its course and its meaning. Are we finding its course joyous, satisfying, and full of infinite content, or is it feverish and disordered, or bleak and unsatisfying. Let us try to realize what existence offers us, and what we have made of that opportunity. Which have been our real and lasting pleasures, which have proved vulgar and disappointing, which have been burdens and fetters in spite of their tinsel surface. . . .

"Stop and let us think whether it is for want of sight that we stumble wretchedly in the dark, bruised, buffeted, clutching at shadows and nothingness, losing our way, falling into mire and brambles, or hurtling horribly into an abyss—or is it not rather because we wilfully shut our eyes to the truth? . . .

"Look! I say, at what we have given to us. . . . How all about us is a splendour and joy—a beauty and interest unfadingly changed and renewed. Let us open wide our eyes to see, and our hands to receive, not trample upon our amazing possessions with the dull foul feet of swine. Look at the divine, inextinguishable mercy of existence which never loses patience with the weakest, the wickedest, the most baffled or feeble, but allows each to sleep and wake and try and try again and yet again for the thousandth, thousandth time.

Look at the infinite pity of being which never despairs of our stupidity or wilfulness, but sets us the lesson anew and anew until it be finally learned. . . .

"Listen to the sweet voices of Wisdom, of Knowledge, of Understanding and Content. They breathe lovely harmonies to the ears not wholly deaf to their exquisite vibrations, setting all life to hidden music. Listening to them the discords, the shrill confused cacophonies of being, the cries of anguish and despair die from out our world like the turmoils of wild dreams when we open our eyes to a new day. . . .

"You recall the saying that 'Now we see as through a glass darkly, but then face to face.' It is just this dark distorting glass of ignorance and perverted preconceptions which I wish to break and bring you face to face with truth. . . .

"Also you remember the saying that when you were a child you thought as a child, but having come to man's estate it was necessary to put away childish things. We have been thinking as children. We have been full of fears of the dark, of possible monsters waiting in shadowy corners. We have been unable to think of tomorrow—the present day seemed to bound our imaginations. We have been occupied with the loud clangings of hollow rattles, with the glaring flamboyance of flimsy tin toys. If a diamond or a pearl lay in our path we trampled it into the mud while we ran to seize a cheap glass marble.

"Now we have come to man's estate, and it behooves us to think as men. It is time we threw away these hollow rattles, these tin toys of money, and power, and empty social distinctions; the little clattering pebbles of jealousies, vanities, greed. . . .

"Now it is time we bore ourselves like men spiritually—letting go nurse's hand and walking on our own two feet. It is time to cease skulking and trembling in fear of the dark. Time to cease putting our hands in the fire and hoping we won't be burned. Time to stop dabbling in the dirt, trusting that some indulgent heavenly nurse will come down and wash and dress us clean each time, and make it all as though it had never been. What paltry ridiculous objects we seem,—now that we have grown up,—to be still paddling in filth and trying to convince ourselves meanwhile that when we are tired of our escapade some divine attendant will be induced to scrub our whiskered countenances and big hairy hands, while we shed a few easy tears of repentance for the wilful self befouling. It was possible for a child to think of the Absolute performing such an office, but is it possible for a man?"

"Oh, Spirit! Spirit!" wailed Winthrop Corbett, between resentment and laughter. "How ruthlessly you tatter our self-delusions and pretences, our vanities and egoisms."

"Why should one be gentle with them?" she questioned sternly. "It is they—small and

numerous—that rot our characters; they which spoil the joy and peace of life. The chinch-bug is a very small insect, but preying upon our grain crops it destroys more wealth every year than the cost of any of our great wars. It is just these things that make the path so very long and toilsome from the reptile to the man. We segregate the patient with bubonic plague. Why should we be indulgent with those who bear about with them the infection of moral plagues? Let your charity and indulgence flow out to all the young, the helpless, and the good who must suffer from the sinner. When you realize that your own weaknesses, self-indulgences, sloths, meannesses, incompetences, greedinesses injure the whole world, all your children, and children's children, and you yourself when you come again, you will not think it fine to be charitable to your own faults. You will be far sterner with yourself than any one else could be."

"Dearest and Loveliest," urged Nelly's gentle voice, "I think we all would be stern with ourselves if we only understood. Since you have taught us I do try to do better . . . not very adequately, of course, but I try. If only," she sighed, "all the whole world might find the Spirit of Understanding!"

A divine flame of love and longing lit the Shining Lady's face. Her deep tender eyes glowed like large stars.

"Ah!" she cried, rising from her seat and spread-

ing wide her arms—"Ah! if I could but pass into the minds of all men and make them see that they must be their own great saviours and healers—make them see that existence is as they themselves shall choose to make it; if I could open their eyes to know the Heaven in which they dwell, and how fair and noble is the place they so wilfully change into Hell. . . .

"If I could show them what infinite riches and delights were theirs for the taking. . . . How beautiful they could make their waking lives in this sweet safe home, and how soft and blessed was the nightly sleep. . . . If I could open all the poor blind eyes that behold only lurid flames or strangling darkness—could unstop the unhappy deaf ears closed to the silver pealing of life's music—could loose the dumb tongues to speak the magic words that create joy—could teach those who stumble lame and wildly through existence to dance and run about the lovely chambers of the world! . . .

"I would give them knowledge, and lead them at last through Wisdom's Gate—beyond which is ever springing life and happiness! . . ."

Her voice ceased, and her companions, knowing that the hour of parting had come, clustered close about, clinging to her hands and her garments in a wistful endeavour to hold her for yet another moment.

"Help me, my dear ones, to do the work that needs be done," she adjured them.

And with broken loving voices they dedicated themselves to her service.

The light of her presence slowly paled, the shining garments melted from their grasp, and they found that instead of clinging to her robe they were tenderly clasping one another's hands.



**This book is under no circumstances to be
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